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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

URBAN WOMEN OF EAST PORT-OF-SPAIN
COPING STYLES AND IDENTITY

BY

©

JOSEPHINE MARY MILNE-HOME

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND

RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

IN

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1988

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The Undersigned cerify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled: URBAN WOMEN OF EAST PORT-OF-SPAIN: COPING STYLES AND STRATEGIES, submitted by JOSEPHINE MARY MILNE-HOME in Cross Cultural Psychology.

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Date: 9 August, 1988

Dedicated to

Sheila Grey and Edna Milne-Home

and

Amelia and David Milne-Home,
Narida, Julia, Melinda, Rachelle, Damien and Brendon Grey

ABSTRACT

URBAN WOMEN OF EAST PORT-OF-SPAIN

COPING STYLES AND IDENTITY

This thesis interfaces contemporary Psychology with constructs of ethnicity, gender, and class in socio-historical context. The research includes five major components:

1. **Historiographical** - locating transforming processes in the rites of passage for women's emancipatory quest to fashion fragments of an emerging/authentic identity. Lessons from history dispell colonized images. Internal cultural dynamics counter claims that Caribbean transformations are imported.
2. **Theoretical** - to provide an adequate conceptual framework for understanding meanings internalized by women within the socio-cultural context.
3. **Demographic** - description of East Port-of-Spain in terms of government census and survey material. The women in this study are predominantly of African descent; poor and part of a slum clearance project.
4. **Conversational Sequences** - to access speech acts/meanings to structure individual experiences. The world-as-lived is the data of experience that is pertinent to this thesis on identity and coping styles.
5. **Ethnography** - through case studies of individual subjects and the literature of the Caribbean. Individual lives have their own thematic/idiographic styles and experience is embedded in the social/semiotic context. Modes of resistance and resilience shaped the lives of women who inherited legacies of emancipatory struggles and continue the hustle to survive. Identity is not 'given' or 'static' but articulated in meaning contexts within one's grasp. Simone de Beauvoir (1957): women are not born women but *become* women.

Semiotic-discoursing towards an emancipatory/emergent psychology; theoretical constructs serve people when they articulate life-worlds in metaphors from parochial realms rather than prescribe middle class, ethnocentric and phallocentric norms through claims of universality. Sociogenetic Psychology links semiotic realms by understanding class, ethnicity and gender-based expressions within the socio-historical context; a Psychology ***sui generis***.

PREFACE

In the process of recording conversations with women in East Port-of-Spain and listening to the voices talking back to me in the course of transcribing tapes while doing this research, I came to appreciate that contradictions can tell us a lot about the nature of paradox in human discourse. Time honoured certainty that ideology and cultural values subscribed to in statements of principle or personal ethical standards are transformed into all manner of human plasticity when ideas are distorted by bonds of blood, sentiment, economic realities, political rationality, ethnic loyalties, genderic affiliation and individual interpretations of appropriateness at any given time. Thus, it must be said from the outset, that the themes come out of dialogues and the themes, like the research findings that emerged, cannot be pinned down as static even though the black and white illusion of permanence is here on the pages in print. The dialogue remains engaged in material realities of cultural participation as personal and cultural identities forge out of traditional moulds in an endless process of construction and reconstruction. A Socio-genetic fashioning of identity is not divorced from the vicissitudes of *being-in-relation* to others and coping within a parochial standpoint of socio-cultural membership.

Cultural transmission of values and individual appropriation of experience rarely proceeds according to conscious intent although intentionality is essential to human action. The cultural hegemony of European doctrines and all manner of socio-cultural engineering has never been able to command conformity or dictate the actions and temperaments of subject people even though the political will of institutional slavery within a plantation economy designed drastic measures for powerful conformity among African and Creole slaves. The manner in which slaves were eventually emancipated demonstrates that a dialectical relationship between abolitionists in Europe and slaves in Trinidad (and the New World generally) continually eroded the foundations of their bondage and the amelioration of planter overlordship. To dream of a life beyond the servitude of slavery and the ubiquitous squalor of a life constructed as labour and nought else, it was not necessary to wait for a school or a church or to reside in a single reality where the plantation and the prison were the only institutions that were known. Traces of memory recalled freedom and patterns of action, meaning and worship were constructed prior to any lodging in the cramped cages below the hatch of that sea of nausea, the Middle Passage.

If anything, historiography shows that human conduct and cultural interpenetration produce all manner of contradictions in the course of evolving values and patterns of conduct. Thus, a purely structuralist model negates the constructivist dimension of cultural change while the functionalist models are severed from history and the processes that are intricately tied to institutional arrangements and the fundamental socio-genetic aspects of themes that emerge from the *world-as-lived* wherein human conduct is predicated on a ground of intersubjective meanings.

The ways in which slave women embraced Christianity, or stretched the values of Europe to conform to the fashions of the elite cannot be divorced from the emancipatory quest and the socio-cultural reality of marginalization. If being-black and being-poor were generally synonymous it was because policy had denied the majority of people any access to European education and European life styles in a conscious effort to promote serfdom, tractability and racism in the creation of a labouring class.

Emancipation and Independence are marked on the calendar at concrete legal transformations in local political history but just as there was a world beyond the Middle Passage linked by individuals who witnessed the transition, so too the negotiation of extraordinary events. Lived reality is a reflected reality and change in human conduct and institutional values is retarded by embeddedness in familiar repertoires and practical constraints imposed by the conservative nature of shared meanings and traditional boundaries that are challenged before anything is demonstrably changed or transformed.

West Indian cultural forms and expressions have undergone a remarkable process of cultural 'miscegenation' and thus West Indian religions, family forms, processes of sexualization and socialization symbolize patterns of conflict, integration and syncretic interpenetration where the core elements have been forged from the ground of local experience in the colonial and neo-colonial social orders. Institutional variation is a reflexion of the truly complex nature of meshing contradictory omens and constructing links for all manner of movement and dreams of advancement or progress within the formal and informal economy.

Until recently, Caribbean research acknowledged women's central role in the domestic domain and the informal structures of the economy as household heads. Her identity was meshed, indeed galvanized into forms that were essentially nurturant of others. Perceptions of women straddle a realm of contradictions in popular cultural myths. She appears as mother, wife, sister, conjugal partner, grandmother, auntie, godparent or machome and so reports on nutrition, health and child welfare, or 'deviant' family forms focused on women. The historical record of the political economy, however, marks women as absent or somewhere backstage. Concepts of the process of enslavement, slavery and emancipation exist in a cultural continuum that paradoxically illumines the conception of free-personhood. Freedom for women or gender equality is essentially ensnared in the substrate of contemporary culture while ideological 'freedom' or the redemptive hope of religion and politics is held out as a challenge for the vigilant and party faithful. The feminization of Caribbean research is a journey into the realms of ambiguous assumptions if the directions are taken from existing ideas about women in the literature. So this effort begins by listening to the voices of women in East Port of Spain.

Women's lives are remarkably different from one individual to the next and so the themes that link individual expressions and experiences can only serve to guide our metaphors. Communalities in the structuring of meanings will serve to shape a working understanding of patterns of coping styles and identity markings within an intersubjective domain of ascriptive definitions. And it is this understanding that emerges for articulating a sociogenetic set of metaphors for a psychology that serves the women it embraces in all their quests. Variations from the ascriptive domain of what it means to be a woman on this turf are as important as the narrow band or stereotyped perceptions of women. Paradoxical incorporation and alienation of being-female and the implications of an emancipated Afro-Trinidadian woman or a 'saved' Pentecostal Shepherd all have a bearing on the critical role of contradiction as an inherent part of the internal relations of gender, as in other social processes.

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My thesis has one author but there are many conversations and loyalties that have been empowering and have helped me to endure so that all can read this work and come to know aspects of life among women in East Port-of-Spain.

For their encouragement and guidance I acknowledge those who served on the committee: Dr. Carolyn Yewchuk, Dr. David Bai, Dr. Harry Garfinkle, Dr. Allan Vanderwell and Dr. Lorraine Wilgosh.

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My gratitude,

Josephine Milne-Home

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IDENTITY AND COPING STYLES

by

Josephine Milne-Home

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Laventille.

(for V. S. Naipaul)

To find the Western Path
Through the Gates of Wrath
Blake

It huddled there
Steel tinkling its blue painted metal air,
tempered in violence, like Rio's favelas,

with snaking, perilous streets whose edges fell as
its episcopal turkey-buzzards fall
from its miraculous hilltop

shrine,
down the impossible drop
to Belmont, Woodbrook, Maraval, St Clair

that shine
like peddlers' tin trinkets in the sun.
From a harsh

shower, its gutters growled and gargled wash
past the Youth Centre, past the water catchment,
a rigid children's carousel of cement;

we climbed where lank electric lines and tension cables
linked its raw brick
hovels like a complex feud,

where the inheritors of the middle passage stewed
five to a room, still clamped below their hatch,
breeding like felonies,

whose lives revolve round prison, graveyard, church.
Below bent breadfruit trees
in the flat, coloured city, class

lay escalated into structures still,
merchant, middleman, magistrate, knight. To go downhill
from here was to ascend.

The middle passage never guessed its end.
This is the height of poverty
for the desperate and black;

climbing, we could look back
with widening memory
on the hot, corrugated iron sea
whose horrors we all

shared. The salt blood knew it well,
you, me, Samuel's daughter, Samuel,
and those ancestors clamped below its grate.

And climbing steeply past the wild
gutters, it shrilled
in the blood, for those who suffered, who were killed,

and who survive.
What other gift was there to give
as the godparents of his unnamed child?

Yet outside the brown annexe of the church, the
stifling odour of bay rum and talc, the particular,
neat sweetness of the crowd distressed

that sense. The black, fawning verger
his bow tie akimbo, grinning, the clown-gloved
fashionable wear of those I deeply loved

once, made me look on with hopelessness and rage
at their new, apish habits, their excess
and fear, the possessed, the self-possessed;

their perfume shrivelled to a childhood fear
of Sabbath graveyards, christenings, marriages,
that muggy, steaming, self-assuring air

of tropical Sabbath afternoons. And in
the church, eyes prickling with rage,
the children rescued from original sin

by their God-father since the middle passage,
the supercilious brown curate, who intones,

healing the guilt in these rachitic bones,
twisting my love within me like a knife,
'across the troubled waters of this life...'

Which of us cares to walk
even if God wished
those retching waters where our souls were fished

for this new world? Afterwards, we talk
in whispers, close to death
among these stones planted on alien earth.

Afterwards,
the ceremony, the careful photograph
moved out of range before the patient tombs,

we dare a laugh,
ritual, desperate words,

born like these children from habitual wombs,

from lives fixed in the unalterable groove
of grinding poverty. I stand out on a balcony
and watch the sun pave its flat, golden path

across the roofs, the aerials, cranes, the tops
of fruit trees crawling downward to the city.
Something inside is laid wide like a wound,

some open passage that has cleft the brain,
some deep, amnesiac blow. We left
somewhere a life we never found,

customs and gods that are not born again,
some crib, some grill of light
clanged shut on us in bondage, and withheld

us from that world below us and beyond,
and in its swaddling cerements we're still bound.

Derek Walcott:[1]

---

[1] "Laventille". The Castaway and other poems London: Jonathan Cape (1963) 1969 pp.32-35.

INTRODUCTION

> Social thinking at the present time has no more important task before it than that of taking adequate account of cultural relativity. In the fields of both sociology and psychology the implications are fundamental, and modern thought about contacts of peoples and about our changing standards is greatly in need of sane and scientific direction. The sophisticated modern temper has made of social relativity, even in the small area which it has recognized, a doctrine of despair. It has pointed out its incongruity with the orthodox dreams of permanence and ideality and with the individual's illusions of autonomy. It has argued that if human experience must give up these, the nutshell of existence is empty. But to interpret our dilemma in these terms is to be guilty of an anachronism. It is only the inevitable cultural lag that makes us insist that the old must be discovered again in the new, that there is no solution but to find the old certainty and stability in the new plasticity. The recognition of cultural relativity carries with it its own values, which need not be those of the absolutist philosophies. It challenges customary opinions and causes those who have been bred to them acute discomfort. It rouses pessimism because it throws old formulae into confusion, not because it contains anything intrinsically difficult. As soon as the new opinion is embraced as customary belief, it will be another trusted bulwark of the good life. We shall arrive then at a more realistic social faith, accepting as grounds of hope and as new bases for tolerance the coexisting and equally valid patterns of life which mankind has created for itself from the materials of existence.
>
> Ruth Benedict[1]

Traditionally, treatises on the history of science have incorporated intellectual challenges in Europe and North America or established their separateness through establishing differences to magnify in the same way. The extensive development in other civilizations grounded in their unique philosophical, political & economic conditions have been disregarded, alienated to an exotic periphery or deemed irrelevant, primitive or Third World. Moreover, within the North American and European tradition, the history of ideas has assumed a universal progression through emphasis on abstraction, empirical research and the unity of scientific knowledge in the discovery of "laws of nature". The illusion of unity has rarely allowed the cracks of divergent and contradictory conceptions to distract the focus. Rarely, has it been recognized that progress in science has adopted concepts from confrontations between contradictory concepts.[2]

---

[1] Ruth Benedict Patterns of Culture: An Analysis of our Social Structure as related to Primitive Civilizations. 1934.

In the history of the New World there are social constructions of reality that the majority of native peoples and African slaves never shared because the reality of history admitted only one class, one race and one gender.[3] The implications of this admission challenges contemporary scholars to transcend the limits of a white patriarchal intelligentsia and open our inquiry to those voices that shared a time but lived very different realities to our records of that time. The construction of identities dimensioned along the lines of race, sex and class has been passed over in the broad sweep of academic pursuits that failed to enter into self scrutiny because 'dispassionate', 'objective' records of 'facticity' could only produce seminal works.

---

[2] See Klaus F. Riegel Foundations of Dialectical Psychology 1979 p.17.

[3] The preface of W.L. Burn Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies 1937 states "When I read Miss (Martha) Beckwith's Black Roadways: A Study of Jamaica Folk Life 1929, I had the alarming thought that perhaps I had not merely got hold of the wrong end of the stick but the wrong stick altogether. In this book, however, I am dealing primarily with a small number of the people of the West Indies, with the minority of whites and the tine group of special magistrates. Beyond these was the great mass of the population, habitually docile, occasionally savage, lazy, improvident, pitifully cheerful, the prey of fears, superstitions, desires, suspicions, which I cannot know. If I had been writing a history of the West Indies in this period I must have attempted to gain a much greater knowledge of the negro mind and of its influence on the white than I possess. p.9

In contemporary psychology that challenge for a human(e) psychology goes beyond a cross-cultural perspective that registers other constructions of socio-cultural reality as variants from a bracket of experience that is the product of this same narrow gauge of a science that represents an essentially North American and European treatise. The decolonization of research from methodology through to conceptual expressions must be released from a grounding in a pervasive elitism. Especially when we have within our discipline a rich heritage for grounding our discourse in the symbolic world of the subject (see Chapters 2 and 3). In this way the voices of Caribbean women need not be disembodied in a Cartesian fashion but linked to lived-worlds of experiences that open our perceptions to validities in all aspects of humanity, past and present.

Melville Herskovits' The Myth of the Negro Past (1941) explored the view that Negroes in the New World experienced a sense of inferiority because they had been denied any sense of achievement or cultural link with their African heritage. The task of locating ancestral connexions to identify with and value in all their complexity is to appreciate endowments of contemporary identity. V.S. Naipaul noted that the greatest damage done by slavery was that it spawned self contempt and encouraged imitation of things European. A quest for authentic identity was lost in attempts to measure self worth against an impossible white male metropolitan standard. "Deprived as a slave of Christianity, education and family, he set himself after emancipation to acquire these things; and every step on the road to whiteness deepened the anomaly of his position and increased his vulnerability."[4] Under slavery "racial insult was added to economic injury" and when the evil structure was removed a wounded pride and stolen dignity would prove that identity could only be experienced as insecure and inadequate.[5]

The thesis whereby Caribbean people present a persona fashioned in metropolitan centre nations may be true only in part, or for only part of the population. This thesis would assume that slaves and the heirs of slaves were unable to create for themselves any distinctive adaptive response or (sub)culture to sustain a distinctive ideology for their own sense of integrity and self worth. And it may well be that mimicry is heaped with aspersions and blame for the plundering of an African heritage, being black, being poor and being victims of a brazen hypocrisy that has gone hand in hand with an ethnocentric overlordship and overwhelming economic dependence. What is at the centre of these arguments is the question of ideology and legitimating processes for the maintenance of power relations that permeate ideals and values for regulating people.

---

[4] V.S. Naipaul.The Middle Passage 1962 "This is the greatest damage done to the Negro by slavery. It taught him self contempt. It set him the ideals of white civilization and made him despise every other." p.72.

[5] Gordon Lewis. Main Currents of Caribbean Thought 1983, pp.6-7.

We can appreciate a culture from within the parameters of that culture it is true, but the global economic reality has not permitted (sub)cultures to escape into some narcissistic incubus beyond the material world of dollars and sense; the world of productive labour in the orientation of capitalist values. Roger Bastide has pointed to the diversity of social adaptations to complex historical forces in the broad African diaspora of the New World. "Black culture is not,... frozen into a system of defense mechanisms too rigid to change, but a living culture, capable of constant creation, keeping in step with the rhythms of change in the global society, of which it is not a marginal but a dialectical element."[6] The paradox is constructed in the cultural alienation or experience of insularity within a relationship of economic dependence. A tradition of exploitation is a legacy of history that a cultural renaissance has exposed to affirm separation from the associations with all those manifestations of power and privilege.

As the primary focus of this thesis is on identity formation and styles of coping for a particular lower class population of women from the standpoint of social science and for an audience of Educational Psychologists, it is important to set the stage so as

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6. From Stephen R. Graubard's Preface to Sidney Mintz's Slavery, Colonialism, and Racism. 1974.

to enhance life histories of contemporary women. Chapter 1 Historical Background: Emerging from the Fragments, reconstructs an aspect of history to initiate the dialogue between heirs of this extraordinary past and social scientists who need to underpin notions of identity with a material dialectical substrate of social/somatic origins and cultural constructions of reality.

T.S. Simey's Welfare and Planning in the West Indies (1946) indicated an appalling lack of cohesion in Caribbean social science where women were concerned. In fact, women were given so little prominence in The Recommendations of the West Indian Royal Commission (1938-39) that they are registered as an afterthought. In the Proposal the place where a program for women should have evolved, along with an umbrella program for social welfare, consideration for women is found "tucked away as an appendage to another recommendation dealing with administrative machinery. And this buried in a subsection called 'Other Needs and Services', attached in its turn as an after-thought to the section on recommendations dealing with administrative reforms in social services."[7]

The various reports and commissions of inquiry into Caribbean social reality registered the overwhelming feature of the Caribbean lower class population as poverty and persistent unemployment; wages so low as to be appalling, primitive working conditions and deplorable housing conditions.[8] The surprising aspect of the urban jamette class, particularly among the women, is that they laugh in the face of all the ills that accompany economic adversity... "the women make a brave show with the gay colours in which they dress, the usual clothing for the men is ragged and dirty."[9] The central problems of the 1930's when the depression fueled labour unrest and radical action on the part of organized workers, was undernourishment and increased vulnerability to disease. This mark of poverty is impressed on the identity and profoundly influenced every aspect of life in the roadways East of the Dry River since ex-slaves drifted to the city in large numbers attracted by the illusion or promise of opportunity.

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[7] T.S. Simey Welfare and Planning in the West Indies 1946 pp.232-233

[8] Official Reports: Report and Evidence of West India Royal Commission 1897; Report of Commission on the Trinidad and Tobago Disturbances (Forster Report) 1937; Report of Maj. G. Orde Brown on Labour Conditions in W. indies 1939; Report of West India Royal Commission (Moyne Report)

In the post World War II and post Independence periods the trends in guiding or liberating philosophies in the sciences contributed to the respective emphases taken by social and welfare planning bodies in the Caribbean. Each phase is a response to the liberating efforts of local struggles in dialogue with evolving social science models. Looking back from the 80's one can record the debts to popular models in the interpretation of Caribbean social and cultural phenomena. In his Keynote address at the Caribbean Studies Conference 1981, Gordon Lewis indicated that the ex-

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1945; Report of Commission to Inquire into the Working of the Sugar Industry in Trinidad (Soulbery Report) 1948; Report by F.W. Dalley on Trade Union Organization and Industrial Relations in Trinidad 1947; Report by F.W. Dalley on General Industrial Conditions and Labour Relations in Trinidad 1954. From Bridget Brereton A History of Modern Trinidad 1981 p.258

[9] T.S. Simey *Ibid* 1946 p.11

isting models had served their 'times.' Thus, there was a real need for new synthesis from concepts that embrace the context of the contemporary Caribbean. Similarly, Rex Nettleford (1985) suggests that research in the Caribbean has, been a victim of conventional interests and that a new era of creativity was needed to generate relevant questions to direct research. "Many have discovered that verifiable, observable facts are not the only phenomena capable of study even if some Caribbean social scientists are yet to admit it."[10]

The Pluralist Model[11] has provided valuable information on constitutional racism but it's emphasis on the legacies of history serves to negate contemporary and diverse forces that shape Caribbean phenomena. It has become negative in the way it makes the dogmatic assertion of ethnic division whilst placing different ethnic groups into segments or *social statics* rather than giving emphasis to the dynamic and strategic aspects of ethnicity. Pluralism as a 'melting pot' formulation does not admit the complex socio-culturally constructed reality where vast changes in the expressions of ethnicity that have come with improvements in education, social mobility, political participation and *embourgiosment* of cultural expressions, particularly religious participation, calypso performances, African dance motifs, and the celebration of carnival.

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[10] Rex Nettleford. 'Definition and Development: The Need for Caribbean Creativity.' Caribbean Review vol xiv, no 3, 1985 p.9

[11] Exemplified by the work of M.G. Smith. The Plural Society in the British West Indies 1965

The pluralist model overlooks aspirations for social class membership which has been shown to dilute the expressions of ethnic difference.[12] When nationalist fervour sought to uncover roots to differentiate Creole society from British society the search took place amongst the lower class yard culture of the Jamettes as the middle classes had already moved away from those ethnic expressions that set them apart in the worlds of Education for Social and Economic advancement.[13]

Gordon Lewis criticizes the pluralist model as being hermeneutically sealed - of offering a cocoon Caribbean society insulated from the outside world. This theory does not recognize the forces that are at work displacing pluralism: "We live in a doctrinaire cloud-cuckoo land if we assume that class has superseded Race in much of the Caribbean Communal Psychology. Class and Race loom large in the Caribbean psyche, but these structures of the person in society are not static monsters."[14]

However, we miss the vital contribution of pluralism if we do not see its advances in the promotion of tolerance and celebration of ethnic differences. There is a need for psychology to play a part in exploring the nature of paradox in the worlds of individuals in Caribbean social reality to avoid the pitfalls of research that does not dialogue with its subjects to understand the structural arrangements and processes of change and challenge in the field under study. The past holds many lessons for the present in helping us understand the Caribbean psyche and the pluralist model may load the past with structures and repertoires that persist in the psycho-dynamics of the present. In this scenario, the past is made the scapegoat for contemporary political decisions and social policies, while the beliefs are carried over from former patterns of relations that permeate contemporary attitudes and values. It would be expedient to dispense with the model before examining the context that gave it prominence and its persistence in hopes and ideals permeating contemporary metaphors and idiomatic speech acts.

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[12] Robert Havinghurst. 'The Relative Importance of Social Class and Ethnicity in Human Development.' Human Development vol 19, 1976 pp.56-64.

[13] Josephine Milne-Home. Education and Cultural Imperialism: Gender and Ethnicity in Reading Textbooks used in Primary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago. M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1980.

[14] Gordon Lewis. *Ibid* 1981.

The Black Power Model has successfully percolated through the Caribbean and is still central in the Caribbean psyche as it has contributed a renewed sense of racial/ethnic pride and challenge to the continuing servitude to European and North American cultural imperatives for codes of social conduct. There has been a rediscovery of African ancestral roots, together with an apocalyptic denial of everything white and everything colonial. The problem with this monument of Black achievement was that it looks through the very narrow prism of race. It overlooked social class, ethnic pluralism, the construction of genderic asymmetries and even the context of the political and ethnographic reality in the

Caribbean. This model of Black Power ignored or was seen by politicians to ignore the struggles of Black nationalists in bringing about political independence and a predominantly Black government to Caribbean nations. It was ignorant of the Marlborough House Conference and the Conference for a Constitution for Independence at Queens Hall in the 60's. It ignored the fact that the past was not a matter of White masters and Black slaves in Trinidad. Black and White is easy, simplistic and it is despicably wrong beyond being an incorrect analysis of events. It is an historical fiction to play in the mind for some need that is beyond the reality of ethnography and events in Trinidad's history. In borrowing so faithfully from the American experience of racism, Trinidad Black Power advocates failed to see many victories won by a Black elite and the eulogizing of Blackness overshadowed local discrimination and local exploitation that was structured along racial lines but it would be false to say that the problem was one of discrimination against Afro-Trinidadians as a monolithic group. "To use Herbert Spencer's phrase in this context 'a beautiful theory it is, murdered by a gang of facts'."[15]

However, all the criticism of Black Power by politicians embarrassed by the ignorance of people and the dim view of so recent a history in the Caribbean has not exorcised this affinity with concepts taken from the Black Power model. Lewis advocates the need to research the antecedents of Black Power in history, especially the meanings of *Negritude* in the French Caribbean experience that produced such renowned intellectual exponents as Franz Fanon and Aime Cesair. Marcus Garvey and the Pan African movement of an earlier era show a rich source of influences that overlap with Black Power today.[16] Here, Gordon Lewis has cast a light on the ugly face of Caribbean violence. The Fanonesque dream of guerrilla warfare or the depressing face of Naipaul's Guerrillas which attributes nothing beyond marginalization as the explanation for the failures of *types* that exist in an ambiance of rampant individualism, charismatic influences, millenialism and the cultural impotence of an *absence of ruins*.[17]

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[15] Gordon Lewis Main Currents of Caribbean Thought 1981 p.6

There is more to this Caribbean variant of Black Power than anyone has been able to critically analyze. It has touched the Caribbean in a way that is fundamentally significant and thus it deserves a more thorough treatment than the reactionary pessimism of Naipaul's novels that condemn the Caribbean as being Black and internally destructive. Rex Nettleford's Mirror Mirror: Identity, race and Protest in Jamaica (1970) captures the paradoxes of a Black Power without wealth that can dwell in fantasies of millenialism from below, or arrogance on the part of Black intellectuals from above, without disrupting the *status quo*. Real power tional ills.[20]

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[16] This parallel has been brilliantly drawn by Gordon Lewis Main Currents of Caribbean Thought 1492-1900 1983 and Rex Nettleford Mirror Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica. 1970.

[17] Orlando Patterson gives this name to his book about the Caribbean, a place with a past but with very few markings on the landscape or in the material culture. The marks are in the local psyche, in kinship patterns and family forms, in religious expression, in the oral tradition and elaboration on the dance motif from memories of Africa. The legacies are there but they are not where you might expect to find them; not in architecture, not in artifacts, but in the symbolic landscape of cultural expression

Gordon Lewis diagnosed a structuralist bias within the very formulation of the theory in that it has become so powerful and so complete that it has made any escape virtually impossible. Every effort in the struggle for economic independence, like Williams' efforts for local ownership through majority share holding, has been reinterpreted through this model as another round of capitalism, another round of dependency, another failure to heap onto the pile and feed futility and inferiority to the local psyche. Lloyd Best and James Millette have used this model to draw out large every scandal in Trinidad where the real victories in localization and privatization have been off-shore banking corporations, global insurance companies, and international finance companies. In this scenario, colonialism has been replaced by a new state capitalism. It seems to be so final, so inescapable but Lewis sees the need for its continued use in imposing moral criticism of our acquisitive society and keeping us all mindful of the price that is paid by the lowest classes for the exigencies of profit. In this light Lewis points out the paradox, where the legacies of the philosophies authored by Karl Marx may prove in the end to be 'nothing much more than the last great heresy of Christianity'.[21]

There is a perceived need to locate the meanings that abound is inherent in the ability to create wealth and this in turn inheres with the ability to make reality out of ideas - an activity which is the triumph of the human spirit, anywhere.[18] In other words creative ideas must be grounded in the Caribbean rather than in an imagination that is disembodied or forged from another reality or belongs in a different skin. The Black Power Model, like the Dependency Model has been overdetermined by dogmas of foreign authorship. For example, Rex Nettleford draws attention to 'revolutionaries plagiarizing Lenin or Trotsky instead of rooting their revolutions in their own soils'.[19]

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[20] Rex Nettleford. 'Contemporary Caribbean Affairs: Problems and Dilemmas.' Public Lecture at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, February 4, 1985.

[21] Gordon Lewis. *Ibid* 1981 p.10

The Dependency Model has been enormously popular in the analysis of colonialism and the economic determinacy of global capitalism in the Caribbean. The case is *closed*. Scholars are engaged with reworking the model through the ideas of contemporary problems or events. The marginalization and alienation of the lower classes is plain to see and the social programs designed for the unemployed too often destroy any remnants of an incentive to work or seek out creative solutions for individual problems or na-

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.18. Rex Nettleford. Mirror Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica 1970 p.234

19. Rex Nettleford. 'Definition and Development: The Need for Caribbean Creativity.' 1985. Here Nettleford is criticizing the mighty force of C.L.R. James who is a much admired figure among the Caribbean Left (see Susan Craig 1982) James has not lived in the Caribbean since his falling out with Williams and the PNM, he is like Naipaul, an exile who still has a potency in the local context out of proportion..being somehow too grand in scale, too brilliant in drawing portraits that capture essences for all to see. But the borrowing from the lessons of Europe has little relevance in the Caribbean unless the genesis comes from local transformations.

in the universe of social discoursing within the Caribbean context. A need exists for studies that pivot around symbolic acts, attitudes and belief structures, religious imagery and all those articulations that coalesce in a dialectic of individual and cultural identity. This trend is a new wave in Caribbean social science research and the genesis of contemporary theory may find the stuff that nourishes relevant theory-making in this avenue of interest. In this scheme culture evolves along with the continuities and contradictions in social organization and the genetic epistemology of cognitive structures that Piaget has propounded.[22] The spacio-temporal reality of human-being insists that people act within general trends or paradigms.

According to Jean Piaget, Jeremy Rifkin and Thomas Kuhn reality must be and needs to be constructed for human conduct articulated and modulated from within epistemological structures or paradigms.[23] A world view is assimilated and internalized in the process of cultural participation or socialization. Thus, thought is limited by the paradigm guiding what can be known or understood. The symbolic domain of social acts and participation within structures aid the translation of concrete expressions to overarching syntheses of theories and ideologies. The articulation that reverberates through structures of society must touch the parochial context and furnish the general context or else drift into an internally logical structure, an ideology, out of touch with current perceptions of the real. (See Chapter 6)

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[22] Jean Piaget. Genetic Epistemology (1956) and Insights and Illusions of Philosophy (1965)

[23] Jeremy Rifkin Entropy: A New World View Parts 1 and 6. 1980 and Thomas Kuhn The Structures of Scientific Revolutions 1962, 1970.

> ...(W)hen a theory is transformed into an ideology, it begins to destroy the self and self-knowledge. Originally born of feeling, it pretends to float above and around feeling. Above sensation. It organizes experiences according to itself, without touching experience....Begun as a cry against the denial of truth, now it denies any truth which does not fit into its scheme. Begun as a way to restore one's sense of reality, now it attempts to discipline real people, to remake natural beings after its own image...Begun as a theory of liberation, it is threatened by new theories of liberation; it builds a prison for the mind.[24]

Different theories dialogue in the gap between immanent and transcendent metaphors that overarch the divisions normally maintained between disciplines. The role of the social scientist, then, entails documenting conditions, but also articulating the way conditions are constructed in the socio-cultural landscape.

The notion of identity is not only fashioned from a developmental or ontogenetic process but is in dialogue with tradition and intersubjective values that have been renegotiated and possibly reified over time. The person is thrown into a world that is already constituted and thus, a shared socio-cultural reality is prior to the individual's quest for identity. In this study

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24. Allison Griffin "The Way of All Ideology" in Bell Hooks Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre. 1984 p.9.
Also see Dorothy Smith (1981) writing from German Ideology II by Karl Marx and Frederick Engel. Smith elaborates on the role of the *intelligentsia* and includes the parochial context of academe an idea discussed by Jean Paul Sartre about the parochial domains..also Wittgenstein on the dialectic between the parochial domains that interpenetrate to lend a fundamental communion of all that it means to be *human*... This is the guiding theme of this thesis :the semiotic bridge of parochial realms towards a psychology that embraces all humanity.

the voices of poor women emerge to express themselves and their relation to the social and demographic substrate of experience.

In Chapter 1 **Historical Background: Emerging from the Fragments**, the discourse on coping strategies and identity formation engages the socio-historical context of recorded impressions of Black womanhood in Trinidad. Her identity cannot be separated from the context of the emancipatory efforts to remove the shackles of slavery and the restrictions of colonialism and the distortions inherited in the social constructions of gender and ethnicity within the parameters of class oppression over time. By uncovering an historiography of Black womanhood it is hoped that the remarkable courage to resist through stoic resilience or to have dared to retain the secrets of an African people will throw light on faces that were spurned to passivity and only existed in the echoes of a white patriarchal historiography. Metropolitan histories of political economy and institutional forms only registered Black female faces when they dared to disturb the *status quo* or thwart stereotypical assumptions about Black womanhood. In essence, this is how Black Power militarism has been 'written-off' while fascination with the spectre of Black Power lingers on like the dream of freedom.

In searching for invisible women the limitations are many and it must be registered that the story is refracted through perceptions that had never meant to introduce an authentic picture of the Black female subject. It is my effort here to write those images for a construction of the emancipatory quest and retrieve something of the struggle from the underworld of slave resistance and rebellion while also acknowledging the efforts of abolitionists in the task of freedom making. The pioneering work of Elsa Govia, and more recent research by Michael Craton, Barry Higman and Lucille Mathurin Mair has begun to uncover the history of Jamaican slavery from the distorting orientation of Colonial/metropolitan historiography. And while the Trinidad experience of slavery is not equivalent to the Jamaican experience, these Caribbean findings have given another reference point for reconstructing a history where women, especially female slaves, are present.[25]

Locating the lives of contemporary women with the efforts towards liberation for human equality in the past is to fashion the fragments that might be linked to an emerging authentic female identity. Similarly, lessons from history dispell colonized or stereotyped images that persist unexamined in our interpretations of women's lives in the Caribbean. An appreciation of history based on the lived-world of experience and a dialectical materialist understanding of women engaged in struggles may allow us access to the voices that reverberate through the structures of the past and echo into the present. In so doing, internal cultural dynamics are acknowledged to counter claims that Caribbean women have been outside the forces expended for her freedom. To appreciate the struggles of women is to begin to understand that it is an ethnocentric arrogance which postulates the idea that revolution and the quest for freedom, equality and authentic identity, can be forced on a people or that puppets can call the spirit to rise or rebel. The United Nations Decade on women (1975-1985) may have offered focus to the 'Woman Question' throughout the world, but it is shamefully inept to suggest that this decade was sprung on women in the Caribbean; as shameful as to insist that Emancipation in 1834 was sprung on docile, tractable slaves from the exclusive efforts of Christian abolitionists in a Parliament at Westminster.

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[25] A brief history of Women Field Workers in Jamaica During Slavery is presented in Lucille Mathurin Mair's 1986 **Elsa Govia Memorial Lecture**.

In Chapter 2 Poor Black Women in Identity Theorizing, the relationship between theories and ideologies that concern themselves with the assignment of gender, class and ethnic definitions are traced and questioned against the challenges of contemporary interest groups. A psychology for women in the East Port-of-Spain community may be linked to the creative efforts of theory construction and methods of contemporary social science but it must be constructed from within the horizon of socio-cultural experience as human experience is embedded in this context. Each individual is 'thrown' into a semiotic matrix and it is from within this material cultural domain that the existential dilemma of discovering one's identity is continually played out. Identity then, is not 'given' naturally, ideologically or symbolically but is articulated and reworked in that dialogue between embodied experience and semiotic context. Or as Simone de Beauvoir succinctly remarked, a woman is not born a woman but *becomes* a woman.[26] Thus in chapter 2 the threads of embodied experience and contemporary ideological challenges to traditional psychology are examined in light of criticisms that psychology has inherited a posture of science that is too narrow to support claims of universality across cultural constructions of human reality.

In Chapter 3 Ethnography and Dialectics in Making Women Problematic makes the case for using ethnographic tools for accessing the public domain of cultural expression among urban women in East Port-of-Spain. However, beyond the need to articulate from the text/context of description is the necessity to access the agency of women subjects and the strategic use of 'aim-rational' identity in everyday interaction. It is the styles of coping with the social and ergonomic environment that shifts the thesis out of the passivity of models that construct human identity from the social structure or demographic landscape. By inserting wit and will into the dialogue between individuals interacting with their particular world and the dominant ideology of social institutions and overarching superstructure, the thesis gives primacy to the women's voices and their interpretations of local conduct, that is, the relational nexus of her identity in the socio-cultural melange.

In Chapter 4 Demographic Context: The Neighbourhood East of the Dry River a portrait of the neighborhood East of the Dry River in Port-of-Spain is offered to enhance our understanding of the bold parameters of this parochial realm. Human conduct does not take place in a vacuum but in a geographic and ergonomic location. The description is taken from the words of women who define this context and from government reports from the Central Statistical Office. The women in this study were predominantly of African descent; they were invariably lower-class and many of them were relocated through the slum clearance project aimed at providing adequate housing for urban slum dwellers. The demographic feature that has circumscribed female reality is the female headed household 'type' or 'deviant' family forms which which say much about the ideology guiding a genre of social science literature. The distinctive grammar for descriptions of matrifocal households reflected on the legitimacy of a static 'type' from a list of repetitious attributes. The demography sets the stage for the lives conducted in these dwellings and at the cross-roads of urban street life.

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[26] Simone de Beauvoir The Second Sex 1957.

In Chapter 5 Case Studies, a selection of conversational sequences for women of different ages tell the stories of women's lives through the creative effort of dialogue within which images are set in the conditions of existence itself. This is not a reorganized static object but the presentation of self and the responding to one another to make sense of each other. In effect each woman establishes her age, her own time biographically, her situation and its constraints, her family ties and kinship network and the styles of coping with crises that are attendant on poverty, unemployment and attempts to deal with events through personal philosophies or religious beliefs and practices. Here we can give emphasis to the words that are shaped by the women themselves and glance at the world within which these (words and women) have taken their shape. The thickness of the sound and the rhythm allows us to enter another reality and find our way in that reality as opposed to translating text into our habitual categories to ennoble our documentation and release us from the tension of being the 'other' or the 'outsider'. Of course, it is impossible to enter all the voices that shaped this thesis due to the practical considerations of space and length, but a sampling of sequences of conversation will permit us to see what is credible from another standpoint.

An attempt to write down the dialect is not meant to be used for entertainment or humour although it is unfortunate that some people see the language of the lower class as inferior or incapable of expressing all the qualities and emotions of human communication. Of course there is humour in the voices as there is a long tradition of 'making joke' in Caribbean self-expression. In fact one of the aspects recurring in themes from the voices of women is an ability to revert suffering and project an exuberance over the frailties of this life. However, the language of these women expresses their world where pathos is as familiar as the belly laugh and no other words could tell their stories more authentically.

In Chapter 6 Themes Emerging from Women's Voices, the conversational sequences are elaborated on to illustrate the complex and intimate connection between the material social reality of the world of experience and the dialectical process of identity formation within the local context. There is some attempt to furnish sequences in their temporal order, that course in which women are inducted through participation in the societal context at points where intersubjective understandings become personal realities in immediate experiencing or appropriation of the social discourse. Coming to know herself is inseparable from the apprehension of the world of social meanings and relationships with others who make assumptions about her identity and the appropriateness of her actions, temperament and general conduct.

Identity is a reflected entity where an individual takes on their world and thus horizons are drawn within the specific context of the world experienced in this double process of coming to know herself and her options in a world already constituted. The language of the world and the language of the self translate subjective and social reality. Of course, identity cannot be separated from psycho-genetic characteristics as individual experience is an embodied consciousness and it would be difficult to mediate the social experiencing of the self as an abstraction of roles, attitudes or words severed from the tensions of coming to know one's world. Significant other persons not only maintain continuity in shared knowledge but continually confirm or reaffirm a person's sense of self and acceptance of self against the chorus of ascriptive categories and models for decency or codes of respectability. The crucial vehicle for reality-maintenance is conversation. On the whole, conversations continually produce and maintain reality. And it is this vehicle that has been tapped to articulate coping styles and identity formation in the parochial context of East Port-of-Spain.

In the Afterword, this deliberate attempt to understand what it means to be a woman from the speech acts of one parochial realm is thrown into a polemic for psychologists to consider. This linking of the parochial domains of Western psychology and the world of women in East Port-of-Spain is an attempt to link the metaphors from life and the metaphors of psychology. A Sociogenetic psychology embraces semiotic realms and parochial lives in a fidelity to constructions of 'reality' by articulating from within the contours of folkways. A Sociogenetic psychology is grounded in the world-as-lived; *sui generis*.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: EMERGING FROM THE FRAGMENTS

> Port of Spain was a place where things had happened and nothing showed. Only people remained. History was a fairytale about Columbus and a fairytale about the strange customs of the aboriginal Caribs and Arawaks; it was impossible now to set them in the landscape. History was the Trinidad five-cent stamp: Raleigh discovering the Pitch Lake. History was also a fairytale not so much about slavery as about its abolition, the good defeating the bad. It was the only way the tale could be told. Any other version would have ended in ambiguity and alarm. The slave was never real. Like the extinct aboriginal, he had to be reconstructed from his daily routine. So he remains, existing, like Vallot's jail (of which no plan survives), only in the imagination. In the records the slave is faceless, silent, with an identification rather than a name. He has no story.
>
> V.S.Naipaul[27]

Trinidad, just off the coast of Venezuela, has been a stage where the dramas of European invention were seldom in agreement with local Creole interests and so the history is a unique weaving of contradictory omens. The centre nations were in the temperate zones of Europe with the island in a far off tropical periphery region. And while economic principles and arrangements of power have fundamentally similar contours, what is essential for the appreciation of these women in Eastern Port-of-Spain is that history forged from the emancipatory struggles of African slaves towards manumission, emancipation and the achievement of citizenship in an independent Trinidad and Tobago. The slave woman is background to the foreground of male European biographies etched in politics, economics and wars. And like the silence of serfdom in historical legends everywhere, the voices of slaves are nowhere to be heard.[28]

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[27] V.S. Naipaul. The Loss of El Dorado: A History. 1969 p.319.

The Spanish, French and English would come as birds of passage for the spoils of profits like the buccaneers before them. Sidney Mintz has drawn attention to the fact that the Caribbean colonies were conquered and exploited under a guise of 'civilizing' an illiterate native population. However, these remote colonies could not be divorced from industrialization in Europe and the whole colonial enterprise was forged by the needs and rivalries of European expansion.[29]

> "I do not know if coffee and sugar are essential to the happiness of Europe, but I know well that these two

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[28] The origins of our oppression, like the roots of all domination, are lost long ago. We are completely without memory of any alternative....We are background to history...negative to their positive...oppressed by an overwhelming sense of not being there...This inability to find ourselves in existing culture as we experience ourselves is true of course for other groups besides women. The working class, blacks, national minorities within capitalism all encounter themselves as echoes...However, the problem for women is particularly internalized. This is partly a matter of history. We have no time or place to look back to. Sheila Rowbotham. Woman's Consciousness, Man's World 1973 Baltimore: Penguin. pp.34-36.

[29] Sidney Mintz. "The Caribbean as a Socio-Cultural Area." in Michael Horowitz (Ed) Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean: An Anthropological Reader. 1971 p.36

> products have accounted for the unhappiness of two great regions of the world: America has been depopulated so as to have land on which to plant them; Africa has been depopulated so as to have the people to cultivate them."
>
> J.H. Bernardin (1773)
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Mintz's Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History draws attention to the colossal construction of a commodity in producing an Empire. And perhaps as importantly Mintz illustrates the way the commodity was articulated through modes of etiquette and conduct among the elite inside rituals and schedules of consumption that grafted the product to status and power which eventually influenced patterns of diet and consumption across the world. Thus the economic legacies of mercantile capitalism are compounded in the Caribbean by the ethnocentrism of Europe. "A racial twist has thereby been given to what is basically an economic phenomenon. Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery."[31] Racism coloured the relationship between colonizer and labourer and set into place the trinity of white plantocrat elite, free-coloured class seeking parity rights and the black labouring class condemned to social anonymity and hard labour. The 'noble lie' of the good white master and the ungrateful black slave justified the 'black truth' of the slave

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[30] from vol 1 of J.H. Bernardin de Saint Pierre's Voyage to Isle de France, Isle de Bourbon, The Cape of Good Hope...With New Observations on Nature and Mankind by an Officer of the King (1773) Cover page quote Sidney Mintz. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. 1985.

[31] Eric Williams. Capitalism and Slavery (1944) 1964 p.7

trade in a politics of language where images of enlightenment and merciful release from the savage tribal warfare of darkest Africa overlaid this commerce in human beings.[32] The Efik of the Niger estuary controlled the trade demanding lines of credit plus arms and an exchange in goods from the Empires of Europe. Ships from Europe and the America's waited for their cargoes offshore. In addition the Europeans had to pay duty for the privilege of trading with Efik chiefs.[33] Thus, an originally Portuguese solution to the problem of labour had become the solution for European global expansion.

The propaganda theme of deliverance masked a virulent racist overlordship that saw native Indians decimated and African slaves scourged under heated labour and carried off prematurely by maltreatment, despondency and disease.[34] Few voices cried out for the Indian and so **Historia de las Indias** (1514) written by Bartolome de Las Casas stands alone like Josephus defending the Jews of old against the Romans. The Dominican Las Casas saw the Inquisition as a prolonged act of genocide against the aboriginal peoples.[35] After Trinidad became known to Spain the Indians were captured and taken to Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo and Hispaniola as slaves.[36]

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[32] Philip D. Curtin. **The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census** Madison, Wis. 1969 estimates that for the full period in which the trade flourished, 1450-1888, some ten million Africans were forcibly captured and transshipped to the New World, with a possible mortality loss on the slavers of 13%-33%..a deliberately conservative estimate. Gordon Lewis. *Ibid* 1983 p.5; See Michael Craton et al for the lament of Las Casa who suggested that importation of African slaves would save the Indian peoples from certain genocide and discovered that it condemned both races to social and cultural death. Also see historical accounts of the tribal wars of the slave trade where the savagery of African was initiated by this raiding of tribes to supply slaves for the New World. The darkness of Africa was created out of the development of capitalist European Empires. See Walter Rodney **How Europe Underdeveloped Africa** for an account of this gruesome economic process paid for in blood.
As to the noble lie of the 'good white master' refer to Marvin Harris 'The Myth of the Friendly Master.' 1971.

[33] Wade Davis **The Serpent and the Rainbow** 1986 pp.44-45.

[34] Gordon Lewis. **Main Currents of Caribbean Thought**. 1983 p.64.

The search for the legendary El Dorado had not completely faded but Trinidad had no city with streets paved in gold. The Spanish Government abolished the repartimientos, or forced labour, in law while its agents in the colony maintained it in fact. Las Casas was haunted at the prospect of seeing before his eyes the total destruction of a population within one generation and suggested the expedient of importing the more robust Negroes from Africa. In 1517, Charles V. authorized the export of 15,000 slaves to San Domingo.[37]

> Las Casas soon repented his advice; and he blamed himself for his oversight, because as he later ascertained...the enslavement of the Negroes was as unjust as that of the Indians...He was not certain that his ignorance and goodwill would excuse him in God's

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[35] Gordon Lewis. *Ibid* 1983 pp.49-56

[36] L.M. Fraser History of Trinidad (1891) In the sixteenth century "Trinidad was scarcely visited, save by vessels engaged in the nefarious trade of carrying off the Indians for the purpose of selling them as slaves." p.2

[37] C.L.R. James The Black Jacobins 1938, 1963 p.3
For more detail on Las Casas the man see Gordon Lewis (1983); Michael Anthony (1975) and of particular interest read 'Las Casas explains the First Negro Imports 1550.' in Michael Craton, et al. (1976)

eyes.[38] The slave trade set in motion tribal wars where human labour was traded for bounty from the Portuguese slave traders.[39] Like the voice that cried for humane treatment of the Amerinidans, the abolitionists and humanitarian governors like Col. Fullarton and Sir Lewis Grant, three centuries on were an exceptional few. In fact Wilberforce feared England's upper chamber as the House of Lords comprised not a few who owed their seats ;and their wealth to the slave trade and would not suffer the trade to be abolished.[40]

Appendix A Table of Historic Events offers a chronicle of important events in the progress of this island community from its European discovery by Columbus in 1498 to the End of the United Nations Decade on Women in 1985. This crude outline of events and forces was overarched by legacies of this island where pigment is seen to colour every political and economic decision and where masculine gender is ever assumed.

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38. E.L. Joseph History of Trinidad 1838 Herrera charged Las Casas with wishing to inflict on the Africans that bondage from which he laboured to free the Indians - some have gone so far as to call him the founder of the African slave trade; this could not have been the case; the slave trade was legalized by a royal ordinance, which bears date 1501, that is, one year before Las Casas went to the New World; besides, the neighbours of the Spaniards, the Portuguese, used to trade in negroes before the discoveries of Columbus took place. p.131

39. See Michael Craton, James Walvin and David Wright Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation 1976 pp.9-10.

40. See William Wilberforce An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire on Behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies. 1832; and Eric E. Williams Capitalism and Slavery 1964 p.48.

1. Spanish Colonization

Reflecting on his beloved Tahitian islanders a disillusioned James Cook would enter into his journal (1770) three centuries on,

> "We debauch their morals already too prone to vice..and we introduce among them wants and perhaps diseases which they never before knew and which serve only to disturb that happy tranquillity they and their forefathers had enjoyed. If anyone denies the truth of this assertion let him tell me what the natives of the whole extent of America have gained by the commerce they have had with Europeans".[41]

Trinidad came to European attention when Christopher Columbus sighted it in 1498. What the unwitting Columbus had done on this voyage of discovery was to set the Amerindian peoples (Arawaks and Caribs)[42] in contact with the projects of Europe. A meeting of peoples that would not benefit the native population. Christian 'enlightenment was resisted and when the San Francisco de los Arenales mission was established the Indians reacted with violence. In the seventeenth century when the Governor of the

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[41] Quoted in Gordon Lewis Main Currents of Caribbean Thought 1983, pp.322-3

[42] Michael Anthony's Chapter 3,"The Aboriginal People" describes the Caribs as a fierce man eating race who had moved up from the Guianas - had completely wiped out the Arawaks in the smaller islands (Lesser Antilles), devouring the men and enslaving the women. ..In contrast to the Caribs, the Arawaks were in general a peace loving, gentle people..engaged in hunting, fishing, and planting vegetables, especially cassava. Along with Columbus was the historian Hernandez de Oviedo, the missionary Bartholome de las Cases, and Columbus's own son, Ferdinand. Las Casas described the people as industrious, their dwellings were spacious and well made, and their pottery as equal to the best produced in Spain...

Cabildo and the clergy gathered to witness the annual feasts of the Indians the warlike dance turned into a massacre. The indians at a given signal had discharged a flight of arrows which killed the Governor, all the priests and most of the white people. Only Corregidor Farfan was excluded out of respect for his bravery and kindness.[43]

The Arawak inhabitants of the larger island were as advanced as any of the inhabitants of the south seas that Cook brought to European attention. They had developed the art of weaving cotton and dyeing the cloth; they built commodious communal dwellings; their fashioning of clay was the equal to anything crafted in Spain and were by no means destitute when they first drew attention from Spain.[44] Their diversion consisted of public and private dances. Herrere mentioned a gathering of over 50,000 dancing through the night and keeping time with exact precision. Their songs or *Arietoes* were historical and musical instruments were crude, being mainly percussion drums and conch shells to mock war. The smaller dances were licentious while the major gatherings were combative in style.[45]

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43. See accounts of this incident in L.M. Fraser *Ibid* 1891 pp.2-3; and the Farfan story in Anthony de Verteuil The Years Before 1981 p.53

44. E.L. Joseph History of Trinidad 1838..Friends and companions of Columbus give a rather favourable report (vide P. Martyr, Oviedo, Herrera, Las Casas and Ferdinand Columbus)...That they possessed the art of weaving cotton into cloth, of dyeing the same beautifully cannot be denied; but in general they went in a state very near to nudity - the chiefs wearing only a short tunic, the rest merely a guayacoo; and according to Bartolomy Columbus, his father found the women of this island in *statu naturalis*. p.119

45. E.L Joseph *Ibid* 1838 p.119

Attitudes to the aboriginal peoples varied from the fascination and sympathies of Las Casas to repulsion and hatred by those who saw only the glory of Spain. Fr. Du Tertre (1667,1671) included notes on their licentious conjugal habits, the ill-treatment of their womenfolk, their drunkenness and vents a particularly scathing attack on their religion. Friends who accompanied Columbus[46], however, gave favourable reports but reserved comments on their nudity, "the chiefs wearing only a short tunic, the rest merely a guayacoo; and according to Bartolomy Columbus, his father found the women of this island in *statu naturalis*."[47] The historian, La Borde wrote, "God I believe, has permitted all Europe to invade the lands of the Caribs because they are an affront to the Creator, because of their bestial way of life."[48] The construction of genetic, moral and racial inferiority was married to a legitimation of abuse and the eventual decimation of aboriginal peoples.

The Amerindians were reduced to labourers in the Spanish plan and missions ensured that their souls and their labour were Catholic. The exploitation of Indian labour, the destruction of their cultural values and traditional life style had left the Indians at the mercy of the Spanish settlers. Cultural genocide being a first line arsenal in the destruction of a fragile and delicate people. Local landowners undermined the layers of control that protected Indians from the planters' designs for labour. Enfeebled by the Spanish assault on their traditional social organization, the Indians were vulnerable to diseases that arrived with their oppressors. Smallpox ravaged those hollowed haunted figures, remnants of an Indian people. It had become apparent that the Amerindians could not afford the labour needed to produce crops commercially and in 1701 a French company promised to deliver 48,000 Africans over a ten year period.[49] In 1716 the *encomiendas*[50] were abolished. In 1733 there were only 28 white adult males in the island.[51] The Cabildo census revealed 162 adult males. However aboriginal people and African slaves were not included as inhabitants. Mulattoes of Spanish- African and Spanish-Amerindians known as *peons* made up the the rest of the census figure.[52] By 1780 the Indians (with the exception of the small population at Arima) had virtually disappeared.

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[46] Maryre, Oviedo, Herrera, Las Casas and Ferdinand Columbus.

[47] See E.L. Joseph History of Trinidad 1838 p.119

[48] See Gordon Lewis for a more detailed account of the constructions of the Indian in the 16th and 17th centuries, Main Currents of Caribbean Thought 1983 p.64

Much has been said about the relative merits of the Spanish compared to other European empire builders of the times but a careful reading of the history of the Inquisition and the treatment of (slaves of any pigment) makes myth of such claims.

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[49] Michael Anthony. **Profile of Trinidad: A Historical Survey from the Discovery to 1900** 1975 p.35

[50] An *encomienda* was a parcel of land granted to privileged Spaniards together with the right to extract labour from the Indian residents under their protection and to convert them to the Catholic faith.

[51] Anthony de Verteuil **The Years Before** 1981 p.53

[52] Michael Anthony. *Ibid* 1975 p.36 gives the number of white males as 24 and peons 138.

Indeed, a system constructed on foundations of degradation and social death to labour could not be otherwise. Slavery was essentially inhuman and inhumane.

2. French Settlement after the Cedula of 1776

The Spanish Government only renewed interest in Trinidad when its strategic position off the coast of the South American mainland became obvious in the project of British expansion in the region. However, to drag this derelict little colony onto the stage as a potentially prosperous plantation economy meant a virtual restocking of characters able to play the parts.

In the Cedula of 1776, Charles III authorized the immigration of Roman Catholic planters as religious affiliation coincided with nations friendly to Spain. The plight of the French in those Caribbean islands acquired by the British made the offer of land and protection from Spain an attractive one. Parcels of land were assigned in proportion to the planter's ability to cultivate and develop the land. In other words, land was apportioned according to the size of a planter's retinue of slaves.

> According to the terms of the Cedula, 32 acres of land were allowed to each white person of either sex, 'and half that quantity of land for each slave the settlers shall induce'. Free Negroes and persons of colour were to receive 16 acres each, again with an additional half for each slave introduced by them.

> Thus the Cedula of Population...created untold suffering and terror among the Africans in the other islands. For in order to obtain the largest possible grants of land, white farmers stole slaves from wherever they could.[53]

Late in 1777 Monsieur Phillip Roume de St Laurent prepared the way for the 1783 Cedula of Population whereby a Spanish Government would rule a French people.[54] After that date a wave of French immigrants swelled the island population. They came from St. Lucia, Santo Domingo, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominica, St. Vincent, and Grenada. Revolutionary disturbances and fears of slave rebellion propelled the uprooting of many planters from other islands along with aristocrats from France itself. They settled around Port of Spain and the South, while the Spanish settlers remained in the St.Joseph area. The Spanish settlers had degenerated into a pathetic alcoholic and essentially destitute condition but the island was now proving that it could be viable on the world stage of merchantile capital enterprises.

Free Coloured slave owners were not excluded from the offer of land but the proportion of land to the number of slaves was lowered. The parcel of land was halved. The double standard for apportioning land was a handicap that Free Coloured immigrants tolerated in a region where double standards were the rule and

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[53] Michael Anthony. *Ibid.* 1975 p.39 To give an idea of the volume of slaves attracted by the Cedula in 1783 the population of Trinidad was 2,763. When a census was taken 14 years later the population was 17,718, ie 2,151 whites, 4,476 free coloured, 1,082 Amerindians, and 10,009 African slaves. p.40

[54] See C. R. Ottley The Story of Port of Spain 1962 p.16

Trinidad was exceptionally moderate. The number of Free Coloured planters exceeded the whites but numbers are not a true indication of power assignment or wealth. The number of Free Coloured immigrants gave Trinidad a very different demographic profile from other economies dependent on the labour of slaves.[55] As a francophone backwater economy Trinidad had a large number of small holdings belonging to Free Coloured planters with smaller retinues of slaves than was typical of the British colonies, particularly Barbados and Jamaica.[56]

The city of Port of Spain was growing rapidly and taking over as the island centre.[57] Governor Chacon moved the *cabildo* from St Joseph to the busier thoroughfare of the Port in 1784 where French immigrants, British merchants and Spanish civil servants and sol-

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[55] The Population of Trinidad 1777-1834.

	whites	free coloured	slaves	Indians	total
1777	340	870	200	-	1,410
1797	2,151	4,474	10,009	1,082	17,716
1802	2,261	5,275	19,709	1,232	28,477
1810	2,495	6,264	20,821	1,683	31,263
1825	3,214	15,003	23,230	727	42,174
1834	3,632	18,724	22,359	-	44,715

Orlando Patterson. Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study 1982 p.497.

[56] Almost 50% of Jamaica's slaves were in units of more than 150, and only 8% in Trinidad (by 1813). In Jamaica and Barbados slaves comprised 90% of the population compared to about 56% in Trinidad. See Barry Higman "Slave Family Patterns in Trinidad" , in Africa and the Caribbean: The Legacies of a Link. 1979 p.42.
In 1824 whites owned 85.5% of slaves and were principally involved in sugar. Anthony de Verteuil. *Ibid* pp.11-12.

[57] With only about 632 inhabitant in 1777, the city's population had increased to 1025 by 1784, of whom 602 were listed as 'new colonists'; by 1797 its population was 4525, consisting of 938 whites, 1671 free coloureds and blacks, and 1916 slaves. Bridget Brereton. A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962. 1981, p.19

diers congregated. Chacon altered the course of the St Ann River and reclaimed the swampy areas along its former course.[58]

The city was alive with amusement parlours and on market days marchands came to town to sell their produce:

> ...buyers and sellers, all attired in their gaudy coloured dresses which reached down to their ankles, and their headkerchiefs of no less gorgeous hues, tied with great dexterity, and bearing in their knots of various shapes the peculiar station in life of the wearer or the fervent desire which filled the heart. *Those French knots spoke a language of their own*, telling the world whether the owner had just fallen in love or was in search of a lover.[59]

In the 1790's the immigrants to Trinidad were French, but of a different character and political persuasion. The French Revolution (1789) was played out in the French Empire (Refer to the Appendix). A fear of cultivating another Haitian style revolution was linked by the French Royalists to the entry of free coloured and black immigrants.[60]

The slaves that arrived in Trinidad after 1795 were not only from neighbouring colonies but from Africa. The abuses of so detestable a traffic were so transparent when complaints could be

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[58] Bridget Brereton. *Ibid* p.19.

[59] (my emphasis) C.R. Ottley *Ibid* 1962 p.20

[60] Trinidad Population in 1797

	white	Coloured	Slave	Indian
Spanish	150	200	300	1,127
French	2,250	4,700	9,700	

Andrew Pearce "Carnival in Nineteenth Century Trinidad" (1956) in Michael Horowitz (Ed) Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean. 1971 p.529

registered that of every 40 to 50 slaves landed, only 5 or 6 remained a few days after arrival. Female slaves were infertile for a period upward of 2 years after crossing the Middle Passage. The inhumanity and neglect offended the humane disposition of Chacon, however the new settlers took advantage of the *code noir* of the French colonies which was as disgraceful as any of the laws ever enacted in either the English or Dutch colonies.[61] For every Spanish inhabitant there were 20 new French settlers and so it was the French who controlled the destiny of Trinidad at the time.

In 1789, not only was it resolved that more billiard tables were in need of a license in Port of Spain, but that laws for the humane treatment of slaves should follow laws enacted in Spain. The *Royal Cedula of 1789* was humane by the standards of the time. Slaves were to receive Christian instruction paid for by owners and slaves were to enjoy the holidays of the Spanish religious calendar. There were regulations regarding food and protection for slaves and these provisions were to be affixed to the doors of churches and the town hall of each district. There were provisions for excluding children under 17 years and people over 60 from forced labour as well as rules for the incapacitated (they could not be freed without adequate provisions for their care). The laws forbade cohabitation without marriage and if a slave from one plantation married a slave from another plantation the owners had to settle their accounts to enable the couple to live together. Slave punishment was restricted to the slave owner and lashes were not to exceed 25. Chapter 12 of the law required that a registry be kept in every district to keep account of births, deaths, marriages and criminal records. And priests were to act as messengers of the rights and orders for the protection of slaves. However, this cedula was so unpopular that it soon became enfeebled through abuse.[62]

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[61] E.L. Joseph History of Trinidad 1838 p.169

> Honouring...the Spanish nation for being, of all Europeans in former ages, the most merciful to the negro race, I regret, that although much exaggeration was occasioned by the enthusiastic temper of the Bishop of Chiapa, (Las Casas) yet in the main his accusation appears too well founded; even those who attempted to contradict him admit such acts of atrocity to have been committed by the Spaniards as to confirm in the main the charge of Las Casas. Putting out the view the history of Cortez and Pizarro, no one can read the productions of Pedro Martyr, of Gonzalo, F. de Oviedo, and above all, of Antonio de Herrera (the most jealous of historians respecting the honour of Spain), without perceiving the general accuracy of the venerable Las Casas.[63]

3. Capitulation to the British 1797

February 17, 1797, the Spanish Governor Chacon surrendered to Sir Ralph Abercromby and another flag flew on the island. Thomas Picton was made military governor in a place where memories of Spanish forms were vague and law was in truth a matter for the governor. Trinidad had entered another era.

The *Spanish-Amerindian* society had given way to a *Spanish-*

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[62] See E.L. Joseph *Ibid* pp173-176.

[63] E. L. Joseph The History of Trinidad 1838 p.131

French-African society and the metropol had moved from Spain to England. The barons were French and according to historian, La Borde, aristocrats among them were authorized to wear the sword of Louis XIV. They sewed insignias of office and rank into their sleeves and lapels. Their manners and style were enhanced by the fabric of their garments which boasted the peculiar powers of their French rank now displaced within the local society of a newly acquired British colony.

Picton would rule as colonial governor with this remote outpost of French aristocracy and be flattered beyond any expectations afforded by birth.[64] In brief, the British governed a colony by the rules of the French plantocrats under the pretense of continuing Spanish law. The French Royalists fleed the French islands when a revolutionary French Government abolished slavery in the French Empire.[65] Thus it was that Picton and British rule gave people like Count de Loppinot de Lafressiliere, the Count de Rouvray, the Count du Castellet, the Baron de Montalembert, the Chevalier Dupont de Vivier de Gourville and others, a second chance to exercise power devoid of the responsibilities of government.

The insecurity of a displaced aristocracy encouraged a code of categories that recognized *128 shades of colour*. The sangmele with 127 parts white was still a *person of colour*.[66] Where the Spanish code had reduced African slaves to the level of their needs, Picton would devise a new code where only the concerns and fears of the French planters were in force.[67] Punishments were harsh and designed to strip Free-Coloureds of the liberties enjoyed under Chacon.[68] This was a frontier territory where cavalier picaroon profiteering and buccaneer-type power strategies were reckoned to keep an uneasy peace.

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[64] He was born, 'of obscure parents somewhere on the mountains of Wales' and 'bred among the goats'. His brother..had been cashiered at the Cape of Good Hope for 'cowardice and cruelty'. His sister had married an American, 'a peddling broker of the name of Bette, who was originally an itinerant showman or player'...V.S. Naipaul. Ibid p.160.

[65] C.L.R. James' (1938) Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution, emphasized that planter renegades were utterly ruthless in their devices for protecting their interests.

Picton violated the 12th article of the capitulation, which secured the rights of the coloured inhabitants of Trinidad. It may be urged, that the people of colour in those days were not like the loyal free blacks and mulattoes of the present times, who are among the most loyal and grateful of her Majesty's subjects.

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66. The true mulatto was the child of the pure black and the pure white. The child of the white and the Mulatto woman was a quarteron with 96 parts white and 32 parts black. But the quarteron could be produced by the white and the marabou in the proportion of 88 to 40, or by the white and the sacatra, in the proportion of 72 to 56 and so on all through the 128 varieties. But the sang-mele with 127 white parts and 1 black part was still a man of colour. C.L.R. James. **The Black Jacobins:Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution.** (1943) 1963, p.38.

67. Picton's Code of 1800

68. Under the Code of 1800: The number of lashes was raised from 25 to 35, a curfew imposed as 9:00 p.m., Negroes were required to carry a pass, Negro dances had to end at 9:00 sharp; sale of rum to Negroes had to be 5 gallons+; a Free-Coloured who admitted a Negro to a dance was fined and the practice of giving slaves Sunday off to work in their provision grounds was abolished and replaced with a $50 fine. *Women were encouraged to breed* (a woman with 3 healthy children was given $1 per child annually and a woman with 7 children was spared from the field). The severest punishment was reserved for practicing obeah or voodoo. The French were powerfully afraid of *savagery* among Africans. V.S. Naipaul. *Ibid* p..156-157.

The free black and coloured man of the present times would think his life cheap in comparison with his duty to defend the country which, in the best sense of the word, made him free; but the people of colour in Trinidad in 1797 were possessed of different sentiments; they had been buoyed up with the fine-sounding words "liberty and equality," which each class of French colonists thought applied to themselves exclusively....[69]

Republican sympathizers among the coloured planters may have been identified as a pretext for the erosion of privilege. This idea of *liberty* and *equality* was dangerous. In the wrong hands it could flourish and so it was put down as villainous and sinister. Subversives among the Free Coloured immigrants were reckoned to want blood rather than equality as that was the currency of power mongering in times when equality was an outrage to the divine order of skin.

On matters of slave management, Picton would defer to his friend , the Chief Magistrate, St. Hilaire Begorrat from Martinique. His skill in devising punishments might best be illustrated by an example:

> In 1794 on the Coblenz Estate, a hundred Negroes had died from poison; the estate had been left derelict...Baron Montalembert bought half the estate in 1801 and stocked it with one hundred and forty seasoned Negroes. Now, in the first year ...a hundred and twenty of his Negroes died. At the same time on St. Hilaire

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[69]. It is a melancholy reflection, that until the last 20 years, the most persevering enemies of the enslaved African were his half-emancipated black and brown brethren. E.L. Joseph History of Trinidad 1838 pp.211-212.

> Begorrat's estate in Diego Martin...more Negroes were poisoned. ...(A) Negro challenge to authority. ...
> Begorrat showed his skill. He had one of the dead Negroes opened in the presence of his Negroes while he and the doctor searched for evidence of poison. 'This solemn business had its effect on the poisoner. She turned out to be a nurse, in the plantation hospital; Her name was Thisbe.'... 'I ordered her to be suspended by the hands about two seconds, five or six inches from the ground; which induced her to confess her crime immediately and declare all her accomplices.'[70]

The 1801 commission headed by Begorrat to inquire into the poisonings issued harsh penalties. But it was the stubbornness of slaves like Thisbe who refused to implicate her husband Felix even when torture was applied that fueled fears of the supernatural in the hands of these Africans.[71] The idea of rooting out obeah by the brutality of fire and faggot was hardly congruent with Christian conduct that plantocrats were so apt to extol as civilizing and contrary to pagan acts among the slave underworld. The courage of slaves under torture and punishment made martyrs of men and women in the eyes of fellow slaves and threw light on the savagery of their overlords. The horror of the sentences makes history no place for the squeamish:

> Bouqui...charged with sorcery, divination and poisoning. (In religious matters a new Negro was considered a child under six, and could be baptized without instruction before execution.)...Fifteen minutes after hanging the Negro executioner took Bouqui's body down and cut off the head. The headless body was tied to a stake. The head was taken away and spiked on a pole on the mountain road to St Joseph. ...Pierre Francios was

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[70] V.S. Naipaul. *Ibid* 1969 pp.167-68

[71] Wade Davis The Serpent and the Rainbow 1986. Davis's study of Haitian Voodoun indicated that the stubbornness of Haitians had to do with the power of Ogun and the African dieties of the Loa.

> chained to the stake with the headless body. He was made to put on a shirt (filled with sulphur). The jail Negroes built up the faggots. The executioner lit the fire. Leonard the mulatto was banished. Louison judged sorcerer's apprentice was banished. Felix (Thisbe's husband) was to watch the executions before his ears were cut off and his forehead branded and then to be banished. La Fortune, who had been in a cachot since imprisonment, was unable to walk to the gallows and had to be taken by cart. Thisbe walked and before she hanged she said in patois, 'This is but like a drink of water to what I have already suffered'...
> (Thisbe's head was spiked at Begorrat's estate and La Fortune's head was spiked at Lazette's, St Anns.)[72]

Picton's military style of "impartial" terror to maintain order was not uncommon in a slave colony, especially a colony populated by French planters. Picton exploited certain privileges as Governor to become a planter and slave-owner. As a planter, slaves and machinery were costly even though land was free. Rumour had it that Picton made his fortune 1. hunting runaway slaves and selling them locally or in Venezuela, 2. settling deceased estates with greater advantage to the Governor than the remaining kin, and 3. the illegal barter with shippers from the U.S. for stock and timber, and 4. there were the Governor's fees (but these were the perquisites of any colonial Governor and Picton was modest compared to most).

A paradox of the man who stripped Free-Coloured residents of privileges they had enjoyed under Chacon's Spanish rule to allay the anxieties of the French was that Picton co-habited with a mulatto woman, Mrs.Rosette Smith, in government house. The in-famous Rosette was reckoned to get men thrown into jail for a fee; and for a fee she would have them released.[73] She shared in the then profitable business in runaway slaves between Trinidad and the Venezuelan mainland. Picton had also awarded her the lucrative fuel supply contract for the garrison.

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[72] V.S. Naipaul 1969 pp.168-80. This form of torture was used by the Spanish to control the Amerindians before the African slaves were introduced. See C. R. Ottley, *Ibid* 1962.

Rosette gathered the elite around her at fashionable parties twice a week and the English invitees of Port of Spain were 'obliged' to attend. The fact that English ladies complied with Rosette's dictates in fashionable circles was extraordinary. Prejudice was rife in Trinidad and white women were especially particular about distancing themselves from people of colour. It was common to refer to free persons of colour as "the mongrel breed". As late as 1832 Urich entered this sketch into his diary: "The prejudice against the coloured (here) is so deeply rooted that it will take a long time for the discrimination to disappear. It is much stronger among the white creoles than amongst the Europeans. The white creole women especially insist on the observance of this difference..."[74]

Scandal and infamy surrounded Rosette. She once ordered an Irish fisherman to the gallows for refusing her a turtle that she wanted on sighting him carrying his catch up the beach. The chief justice intervened to redeem the fisherman but for his trouble Picton "called him a reptile and had him sacked." Thus, when Rosette desires an old fashioned Port of Spain residence the judge is in no position to settle the dispute.

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[73] In a slave society the prison was a place of horror. Planters employed the jailer to administer the punishments they ordered. Vallot was paid fees according to the punishments assigned. His wife was paid fees if extra food or coffee was to be given to prisoners (as in the case of Luisa Calderon). The gaol ran on the principles of business in the service sector for planters and fees were paid for *services rendered*. The jail was always full as alquazils were paid a fee for picking up curfew breakers. Alquazils were equivalent to policemen. They were Free Blacks as Free Coloureds felt the job was degrading.

[74] See Anthony de Verteuil The Years Before 1981 p.12

> When the Chief Judge of the Cabildo refused to co-operate with Rosette, rumour had it that Rosette took it out on Picton, refusing to let him sleep with her until she was inside Mrs. Giffith's house. Picton ordered that the judge be sacked, soldiers surrounded the house and hurled insults all night. Rosette stood outside and warned the soldiers that she would have the skin off their backs if they let anyone in or out. After five days Mrs. Griffith surrendered the house.[75]

At this time English merchants of the "English party" (that was entered into by the English throughout the British West Indies) circulated a petition to the King, to accord the "blessings of a British Constitution." The 'Ugly Club' as they were known in the *Gazette*, were meeting in a tavern to discuss a petition for a British constitution as Spanish laws had seen many of their number go bankrupt. Those familiar with Spanish laws or could predict Picton's response were borrowing money without any intention of paying back. To appear before a now compromised Irish Judge and a Spanish-born escribano who wrote only in Spanish and collected fees for his writing and the paper was to deal in a system as confusing and corrupt as it was powerful.

Picton notified Mr. Wharton, the tavern keeper where the English party were to dine and sign the petition, that he would be held responsible for any meeting that might be held on his premises. There were numerous examples to suggest that Picton was vehemently opposed to the "English party" and treated those who dared to petition the King as being involved in "seditious conduct". Messrs. Higham and Shaw were stripped of their commissions in the militia and thrown into gaol on the charge of "seditious conduct" for just such an offence.[76]

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[75] V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 pp.164-65

V.S. Naipaul's Los of El Dorado, recounts the story of a Free Black woman who complained to a magistrate about having been raped. The Chief Magistrate sent her to Picton... 'to whom I thought it would afford amusement to hear of a rape in the West Indies'. After his early-afternoon dinner that day the Chief Magistrate walked down to the wharf. There he saw one of the accused men about to be hanged. 'Villain!' Picton was shouting. 'You are going to hell with lies in your mouth'. The three other men were sentenced by court martial to 1,500 lashes each.[77]

Apparently Picton had quarreled with Gallagher in a brothel over a prostitute whose price was one *Portugal piece*. Whereupon another prostitute claimed that Gallagher had once raped her and stolen her handkerchief. This charge gave Picton an opportune excuse to deal with his rival.

L.M. Fraser History of Trinidad reports the Hugh Gallagher incident very differently. Gallagher "had been guilty of committing an outrageous rape and robbery on the person of a widow woman

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76. L.M. Fraser *Ibid* 1891 pp.137-141

77. V.S. Naipaul. *Ibid* 1969 p.134

on the high road to St. Joseph... Here, too far from any house for their cries to be heard, the two women (the free black woman and a black girl with her) were suddenly attacked by four soldiers of the Garrison, who, having penetrated upon them a most cowardly and brutal outrage, left them half dead from terror, having robbed them of everything valuable they had about them... The execution of Gallagher was attributed to Picton as a crime, and as a proof of that thirst for human blood which his enemies declared to be one of his chief characteristics."[78]

It was not wise to cross swords with Picton as recalcitrants were clearly at a disadvantage. He would send for 'trouble-makers' (especially Englishmen) or greet immigrants and take them to his gallery overlooking 'the mark of civilization - the gallows' that he had erected at government house. If rumour had implicated someone he would tell the party that he would intimate knowledge of the offence which he hoped, for his own sake was not true : "go," he would say, "reform your former life, and you will be protected, otherwise - (Here his eagle features would assume a stern look, and he would point to the gibbet.) He generally dismissed them with these words - "either leave the island, or behave in accordance with your oath of allegiance; otherwise the wind shall pass between the soles of your feet and the earth."[79]

Buried in the story of the English challenge to Picton's power through advocating English government by English laws, is a story of woman who also dares to challenge conventional rules and suffers the conventional consequences. Among the Englishman was a Dr. Sanderson from the Corresponding Society whom the gaoler, Vallot[80] judged as "unhuman and a bad master"

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[78]. L.M. Fraser *Ibid* 1896 pp.141-144

[79]. E.L. Joseph *Ibid* 1838, pp.208-209

> Sanderson, who didn't have much of an estate anyway, had flogged one of his few Negroes on the face...And there was the Negro wench who had complained against Sanderson. Her complaint of maltreatment was proved; she had been confiscated and lodged in the jail. She was very ill. Vallot sometimes bought an enfeebled Negro in his jail as a speculation; but this girl was too far gone. Vallot begged Sanderson to redeem her. Sanderson said she was government property now and no concern of his. Two or three days later she died.[81]

Slave women were aware that flights of freedom were swiftly dealt with in a system where terror was an excuse for law and order. The laws held an element of caprice that favoured French power mongers and put Englishmen at a distinct disadvantage. The taste of freedom was like a draught of poison for a slave who belonged to a 'recalcitrant' master and yet we hear of a Negro slave woman called Present who eloped with a Black Soldier. Unfortunately for Present, she was hanged for *her* 'crime' before her owner could get to the jail to claim his valuable slave.[82] English *Owners* were often punished in this way. If they dared to interfere with the powers of French plantocrats and their governor they faced ruin. Slaves were vulnerable pawns in this wager of power between colonial slave-owners.[83]

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[80] "He took his fees and did his job, flogging a Negro in a simple or complicated way, cutting off a pair of ears, branding cheeks with a hot iron, fitting stocks, checking a *cachot*. He didn't deal in pain; he could say, as he did later, that he didn't know whether he applied a torture with severity or not. V.S. Naipaul. *Ibid* p.170.

[81] V.S. Naipaul. *Ibid* 1969 p.170

[82] V.S. Naipaul. *Ibid* 1969 p.134

In Santo Domingo the revolution continued. Toussaint Louverture had been captured and General Leclerc planned to exterminate creole Negroes and completely restock with Africans.[84] In this political climate Picton saw his measures as necessary to maintain order and suppress revolutionary tendencies especially among the Free Coloured and Black members of the population. Any criticism or hint of brutality was viewed as seditious and incitement to rebellion. However, the English Government of 1802 was beginning to develop a conscience under attack from an increasingly popular humanitarian movement.

In 1803 Picton was joined by two commissioners, a strategy designed to remove Picton from office without the sting of dishonour. Colonel William Fullarton, the first commissioner and his wife, the daughter of Lord Reay, would gather evidence against Picton. The styles of the two men were set in bolder contrast through their association with women. Picton was a soldier from a common background, now slave holding tyrant under the influence of the notorious Rosette Smith in Government House. This liaison, ambiguous for the Governor but common among men, would illustrate Picton's colonial masculine character as a man among colonial men. Picton spoke the languages of the island with the same fluency and intonation as the Creoles and Venezuelans. Fullarton, on the other hand, was well connected, wealthy, educated but trailed by a series of financial mishandlings that were embarrassing for the British Government.

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[83] Picton was attacked for being 'a *British* governor struggling to prevent the extension of *British* laws to a *British* colony'. London didn't want another West Indian slave colony. They wanted Trinidad to be a colony of free settlers: it would be an offering to the abolitionists...There had been advertisements for settlers in the London newspapers: ten acres for a white settler, implements, rations for a year, a house subsidy. There had been talk of transporting London prostitutes to 'increase the white population.'...Picton has ignored all this. The people he had welcomed were the titled French and their Negroes. V.S. Naipaul. *Ibid* 1969 pp.184-85.

[84] As French planters preferred African born slaves the population of slaves imported to Trinidad with these planters were coming directly from slavers with cargoes from West Africa. This lends supports for African cultural survivals.

Fullarton's wife was from a different class and background to the majority of women resident in Trinidad. She was an upper class educated lady in a colony where plans for shipment of prostitutes from London for an increase in the white population could be aired without causing offence. Mrs. Fullarton was actively involved in most aspects of her husband's work. Added to this, the Fullarton's extended social invitations to people who were beyond the complexion based social demarcation limit, especially where French sensibilities were concerned. At one point, Mrs. Fullarton was said to have seated a French guest beside a mulatto at her table, but this was dismissed as totally false, for even if the lady had made this mistake, it would be unthinkable that the Baron de Montalembert would compound the error by allowing himself to take this seat of insult and dishonour to his recognized status.[85] This was at a time when white men might disdain to converse with the more distinguished free gentlemen of colour, but in the company of women this was simply not done. The English women gracing Rosette Picton's soirees with their presence was an anomaly that only Picton's power could explain.

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[85] See V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 p.229.

Both Picton and the third commissioner, Commodore Samuel Hood despised Mrs. Fullarton (and her sister) as much as they loathed the first commissioner. They described her as *dangerous and irritating* and saw Fullarton as 'an artful cunning man *under the absolute direction of an intriguing woman*'.[86] E.L. Joseph (1838) described Fullarton as living under "petticoat government" being completely dominated by "two of the most competent political intriguants that ever came to afflict a West Indian colony". The Fullartons subscribed to an humanitarian ideal that was gaining acceptance among some educated liberal thinking British circles, but this system of values was clearly foreign in a slave society.

The system of slavery itself offended radical humanitarian ideals. Fullarton noted a construction of values where the slave always appears on the stage twice, as victim and as menace. The ambiguity of roles provided ample justification for any measures implemented to secure discipline and production.[87] When the Fullartons sailed for England they carried documentation to lay 37

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86. V.S. Naipaul. *Ibid* 1969 p.207

87. E.L. Joseph *Ibid* 1838 condemned Fullarton and revered Picton as a man for Trinidad in the times reflected, "..in justice to Col.Fullarton it should be stated that he was possessed of liberty for the unfortunate black and mulatto races which is creditable to his memory." p.219 These are two words in the motto of Trinidad and Tobago - the third is *tolerance* but that was historically premature and would not be added until Independence in 1962.

charges against Picton (including the famous case of the torture of Luisa Calderon.[88]) Among the charges were; execution without trial, false imprisonment, torture and one burning alive.[89] Picton's expediency was displaced in a system of values where atrocity was seen as necessary to preserve peace, aristocracy and monarchy and damn the bloodshed of *Liberty and Equality*. It was said that 'he was a victim of people's conscience, of ideas of humanity and reason that were ahead of the reality'.[90] He was a governor of a colony; a man of his time in a slave based plantation economy. Col. Fullarton was despised for his sympathies with the *'mongrel'* cause.

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[88] On Dec 7, 1801, Pedro Ruiz, a tobacco seller in PoS complained of the theft of $2,000. Luisa was a mistress of 2 yrs. Her paramour was Carlos Gonzales; the man accused of the crime (of theft). Luisa and her mother were thrown into jail. Vaillot was paid by Ruiz to treat Luisa well but Begorrat ordered torture to extract a confession. In hindsight it would appear that Luisa and Carlos were victims of jealousy. The money was never uncovered and Pedro was able to pay for a shipment of tobacco only days after the said theft. Carlos was ruined and Luisa would become something of an exotic celebrity during the trial that would take years.

[89] Of particular interest here is Payne's list of unpaid fees for the administration of punishments.

1. Hanged and burned at St Joseph..head off 1 man
2. Ears clipt off at ditto 2 men
3. Ears clipt and stamped 4 men
4. Flogged under gallows 1 man
5. Punished at pillory 1 man
6. Led through town and pilloried 1 man
7. Ears clipt in market 1 man
8. Ditto in yard 1 man
9. Mulatto man and Negro man flogged through town 2 man
10. Ears cut off in the jail yard of 2 black men 2 men

Received in part (payment) 2 Joes.
William Payne (V.S. Naipaul 1969 p.197)

Note: This is not a complaint about brutality it is a complaint about back pay for services rendered. Payne thought that Fullarton might do something about his plight.

[90] V.S. Naipaul 1969 p.132

Port-of-Spain

Ethnographically, Port of Spain was French and Spanish. A Venezuelan character was kept alive by traders, sailors and skilled tradesmen of ruddy stock. Spanish shops sold peon staples, salt and tobacco. Spanish was the language of the streets but few Spaniards could read. The newspaper, the Courant, was in French and English and featured advertisements. These included the sale of carts, and African slaves, and also carried descriptions of runaway slaves. Their features included: *maimed, one eyed and much marked by the whip.*[91] It was the mark of the whip and physical deformities born in servitude that gave the slaves their identity for the readers of the Courant.

Port of Spain was not a place where people expected to die in dignity at some ripe old age. The slaves were carried off by hard work, disease and *mal d'estomac* from eating dirt. Poor English immigrants among the civil servants and soldiers,[92] were reputed to be carried off by their vices; billiards, alcohol and sex. Mortality among the corps of civil servants was such that almost half their number had died within the first year.

The European, as soon as he arrived, looked out for a

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[91] V.S. Naipaul 1969 p.163

[92] C.R. Ottley. *Ibid* (1962) described how Picton would put new immigrants through a rude ritual of introduction to Trinidad. He would show them the gallows that he had erected on the center lawn of government house and say, 'you had better behave yourself or the wind will pass between the ground and the soles of your feet'.

> mistress, 'either of black, yellow or livid kind'. If he liked a Negro woman he bargained with the owner; if he found a free woman of colour he bargained with her mother. Free mulatto women acted as go betweens, and a mulatto, Mrs. Perry, ran the best brothel in Port of Spain; it was called 'The British Coffee House'.[93]

In the colonial setting the downtrodden Europeans were despised by all including the slaves who accompanied them last in their slave huts. Most English clerks and soldiers died before they had seen a year to its end in Trinidad. The girls' fate in these liaisons of convenience with the 'downtrodden' from Europe does not rate a mention it seems. The vices would seem less lethal than the "downtrodden-ness" of these unfortunate men. Venereal disease was only one of many causes of death in Trinidad where waves of water born diseases took their toll at the onset of each wet season and where sanitation was not yet the priority of government. Sex was sinful and the wrath of God was no matter for jest but it would seem that the lives of clerks and soldiers were struck down with greater regularity than the numbers of men who were eligible on the grounds of repeated violation of this particular commandment.

One would have to be forgiven if the distinction between being female and being a wench, a prostitute, a mistress, a concubine or a wife has become null. A woman is so narrowly defined by parameters of her sexual relationship with (white) men if she appears at all. White women were defined by their cruelty and austerity in their treatment of slaves, their idleness and intense jealousy of black and mulatto women who competed exceptionally well in attracting favours from the husbands and lovers of their white counterparts.[94] "*Immoral* connection with the degraded class (mulatto) of the female population is almost universal, prevailing with scarcely an exception, among the married no less than the unmarried men...prostitution is unhappily now the only portion of the Coloured women; and that the White men who form connections with them purchase them of their owners, and in many instances of their own parents."[95] Thomas Atwood noted during his travels in Jamaica in 1791 that.."The sexes are so little attached that men have several wives as well as transient mistresses, while women leave their husbands for others, mothers will dispose of their virgin daughters to white men for a moderate fee and consider that no dishonour is done."[96]

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[93] V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 p.163

The system of slavery produced degradation beyond the whip for slave women who were stripped in the presence of gangs and made to endure their punishment from drivers who were usually the strongest and stoutest Negroes from among them. Wilberforce would write "No one who reflects on the subject can be at a loss to anticipate one odious use which is too commonly made of this despotism, in exorting, from the fears of the young females who are subject to it, compliances with the licentious desires of the drivers, which they might otherwise have refused from attachment to another, if not from moral feelings and restraints."[97] And a few pages on, "Licentiousness.. is not confined to the Negroes. The fact is perfectly notorious, that it has been the general policy to employ, instead of married managers and overseers, single young men, as the immediate superintendents of the gangs; and hence it too naturally follows, that they who, from their being the depositories of the master's authority, out to be the protectors of the purity of the young females, too often become their corrupters."[98]

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[94] Mulatto women lived in comfort and luxury in private brothels in 1789. Of 7,000 Mulatto women in San Domingo, 5,000 were either prostitutes or the kept mistresses of white men. C.L.R. James Black Jacobins 1938 p.32.

[95] William Wilberforce Esq., M.P. An Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire in Behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies. pp.17-18

[96] Atwood 1791 in Abrahams & Szwed After Africa.1983 pp.19-20
This must be seen from within the context of the times. In Europe peasant or lower class women prostituted their daughters to nobles. And to this day women from lower class backgrounds fill brothels around the world... Edmonton, Port-of-Spain, Bangkok, Manilla, London... I think the picture is ever clear.

P.F. McCallum, the Scottish pamphleteer from Philadephia with interests in the "Ugly Club", arrived in Trinidad on a Sunday as an early international journalist of sorts. He had hoped for the ritual of Picton pointing to his gallows to furnish a publication but Picton did not welcome this particular batch of immigrants. The new arrival was shocked by the lack of observance of the sabbath[99] and outraged by the openness with which gambling houses, and the women in them, conducted their trades. His lodgings adjacent the military barracks rattled his conscience as the sound of the constant floggings was not dulled by distance.[100]

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[97] William Wilberforce, *Ibid* 1823 p.13

[98] William Wilberforce *Ibid* 1823 pp.16-17

[99] It must be stressed that religion loomed very large in the psyche/social world of the early nineteenth century. Piety and slavery coexisted without causing offence. In fact a slaver was able to write the hymn "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds" while Africans were being loaded into crates below deck for the trans Atlantic journey. See C.L.R. James Chapter 1 "The Property" *Ibid* 1938

McCallum gathered images that have become enshrined in stereotypes of the age. Picton's vain glorious reign was his main subject but descriptions of different aspects of this visit are as valuable. Recalling his visit to the Indian Mission McCallum "envied the Indians 'their harmless minds' but 'pitied the blindness of their ideas'; (Not unusually)...he thought the missionary was a lecher... (and) he saw Negro women with chains linking neck to ankle and thanked God he had a white colour."[101]

Governor Hislop had inherited Picton's legacy and was dogged by conspiracies. McCallum had sent pamphlets to individuals in Trinidad to celebrate the end of a long trial in England where Picton had been found guilty of the torture of Luisa Calderon.[102] In Trinidad the climate of planter attitudes had not changed, Here Picton was no tyrant or despot, he was a British Governor who was being slandered by enterprising and ambitious Free Coloured and Black people. Conversely, Fullarton was to be cast as the defender of the *mongrel* class in a Trinidad that despised and feared this threat to their powers.[103]

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[100] The soldiers did not have the same protection under the lash as was included in the slave management codes. It was not unusual for Picton to order 1,500 lashes. The slave maximum was 35 honoured more in the breech than to the letter. See Anthony de Verteuil *Ibid* 1981 p.230 where it was not uncommon for soldiers to be carried to hospital after a lashing to recover in order to be lashed again until the full quota was reached.

[101] See V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 pp.199-200
I recall reading somewhere that this particular punishment was issued for the crime of procuring an abortion. Of course one punishment can fit many different crimes.

[102] Picton was later acquitted and given a military posting.

In 1806, Hislop was overwhelmed by changing political currents abroad and another local sensation on this island that had been patterned by waves of migrations. People from different cultures arrived in a land where pigment had become the symbol of status and power.[104] The mulatto population was posing a threat to the neat correlation of pigment and station. An experiment in race dynamics was on trial. The liberal Col.Fullarton, like the humane Bartolome Las Casas before him, put forward a plan to Mr. Windham to import indentured labour from Asia to end the horror of the slave trade. Hislop witnessed the arrival of one hundred and ninety two men and one woman from Macao aboard the Fortitude. These Tartars were reputed to be convicts and whether it had occurred to the planners to bring women, or whether the crippled feet of the women in Macao made them poor prospects for importation, it would seem that these immigrants without women were a plague on administrators. The idea of using their labour to grow tea never materialized and the greater part of their number returned on the Fortitude. The rest resumed their criminal activities in Trinidad.

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[103] At this same time Hislop's secretary was busy exploiting his posting to secure rapid advancement back home. He raked in a fortune in *fees* while casting the aspersion that Hislop was an *alcoholic lecher*. Debasement of 'superiors' is part of any eviction from office in this exploitative scheme and we see this throughout political history. See V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 p.265.

[104] *Pigmentocracy* was a term coined by Elsa Govia to emphasize the correlation between shade of skin pigment and the status and power enjoyed in the West Indian community. The lighter pigment was separated to the top while the darker pigments were condemned to ranks below, with the African slave at the base stripped of any rank and burdened with labour.

> They soon taught the lower order of people gaming, and were rather too frequently detected as receivers of stolen goods; nor could they conceive the justice in punishing them, as they called it, "for making good bargains," as long as they themselves did not steal, which they never did.[105]

The idea that the Chinese would form an industrious peasantry as a buffer between the whites and the Negroes was not going hopelessly wrong. "For the moment, however, to whites, mulattoes and Negroes, the Chinese were only objects of an affectionate but puzzled scrutiny: the costumes, the pigtails, the little trotting walk, the dainty umbrellas. They didn't look like peasantry; perhaps the *wrong* Chinese had been picked up."[106]

Hislop's experiment with a Chinese buffer zone in the pigmentocacy proved disastrous. However, the few Chinese that remained prospered and never suffered any child of theirs to be a slave. They manumitted the mother of their children and sent their offspring to English schools.

Travellers in the Caribbean, like McCallum, have left us with some ideas about how cultural differences and aspects of the plantation economy were seen. To the traveller the world of others is *exotic*, strange and must be placed on structures of understanding available to incorporate novelty. From Thomas Atwood (1791) we have descriptions of Afro-Jamaicans that we can recognize in racist attitudes towards New World African people to this day. The construction of inferiority made routine travesties of human justice, if not acceptable, at least an unavoidable imposition on plantocrats of otherwise noble, educated and Christian bearing. To Atwood the 'Negroes' were 'intellectually dull' but surprisingly 'talented where musical instruments were concerned'. They *professed* the Roman Catholic faith while *practicing* 'witch craft' and 'obeah'.[107] They were given to such vices as 'drunkenness', 'thievery', 'incontinence' and 'laziness'.

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[105] E.L. Joseph *Ibid* 1838 p233

[106] V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 pp.270-271

Few travelers could consider their diaries complete without mentioning those activities that spawned a sense of horror to reside in the gut and mind of slave owners. African people were *deadly* serious about the powers for evil and the wandering spirits of the dead. It would be difficult to interpret their bondage as serfs in any other light than a vision of being condemned to the hell of a traduced and persecuted race. In 1838 E.L. Joseph's History of Trinidad included an explanation:

> Most persons who know any thing of the character of African negroes are aware of the prevalence of a pernicious superstition called obi, or obiah. This miserable imposition has cost hundreds and thousands of lives in the West Indies, and is not easily dealt with (a deceased friend of mine acted with considerable judgment on detecting an old man who absolutely killed

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[107] This difference between what was said and what was done is an appeal to conformity within the legitimate 'folkways' while 'trafficking' in another. Mrs. Carmichael will complain about the ease with which slaves perjure themselves. Religious practices belonged to the underworld, the world the slaves made. see Eugene Genovese Roll Jordon, Roll

> several of his people with sheer fright of obi); to pass it over without severe punishment, is to gloss over the malice of impostors which is dreadfully injurious. The infatuation of the African, when he fancies himself under the influence of obi, is beyond credibility... It is true, enchanters may be condemned and burnt; but their execution strengthens the belief in their power....the burnt obi man is a kind of martyr.
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> It often happens that to the wretched imposition of obi the negro adds the real crime of poisoning : the knowledge that these people possess of poison is truly awful and incredible. I have been convinced of this by seeing them make experiments on animals."[108]

The *Middle Passage* was rough and Africans were *numbed*, not *decapitated*. Their knowledge of poisons and the displacement of that knowledge within traditional structures of religion and law enforcement did not vanish on the high seas. The slaves were human and in this world where they were caste as serfs they were engaged in deciphering their own meanings and any crack in the structure of oppression was used in the struggle for emancipation. As political beings slaves used every device available strategically. And as they outnumbered plantocrats by 90 to 1 on some islands and 50 to 1 in Trinidad it is not surprising that secret societies and ritualistic performances of West African origins spread tentacles throughout the entire slave population. To appropriate meaning is essential to human-being.

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[108] E.L. Joseph *Ibid* Obi is the scapegoat of the West Indies; it covered a multitude of sins." pp.212-213 Also see Wade Davis's The Serpent and the Rainbow 1983 for the research done to uncover the knowledge of poisons among the Haitian secret societies. The art is so precise as to be able to produce zombification by a topically active drug (poison) which allows the priest or conjurer to capture the ti bon ange / the spirit, personality or soul of the person while the body lives. Knowledge of poisons was brought by slaves centuries past and only uncovered by an ethno-botanist in this decade.

Creolization meant a modification of literal African forms to use as conceptual tools in interpreting their current concrete life-world as slaves in a plantation economy controlled by the metropolitan markets and governments.[109] Here is an example where we might expect that the Gods, the dead and the 'heathenish practices' were conjured with for a margin of political advantage. While, I do not wish to suggest that every religious act was politically inspired or strategic in principle, ritual expressions may have spurred the conscience of those who were in close contact with slaves:

> Their superstitions with respect to their dead are truly ridiculous, for they suppose that the deceased both eat and drink in their coffins; and for that purpose, they put therein articles of both; together with a pipe and tobacco, and such things as they know the deceased was fond of in his life time. Moreover, at their funerals they believe the *dead have the power* of compelling them to carry it to the grave, in which road it likes, to shew *its resentment* to those who have offended it.[110]

The dead are beyond reprisal and so the dead are able to *speak* to (for) the silenced slaves and to the violence of their overlords. We might have some idea about the character of Black Comedy when we think of coffin bearers being forced by the dead to drop a body at the feet of a cruel master or mistress, or an enemy among the slaves. One can imagine that the dead slave tumbled across

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109. This theme is Melville Herskovits' famous thesis that was pitted against the ideas of Franklin Frazier and his theory of pathology in Negro integration in the U.S. These themes will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

110. Atwood 1791 in Abrahams and Szwed *Ibid* 1983 p.20

the *stage of the conscience* of the master-class one last time before they could be set to work by living conjurers and necromancers. In the world of the African Gods the slaves had mastery. And it must never be forgotten that the Gods resided in higher courts than any member of the plantocracy. Religion was mighty powerful stuff to conjure with and in the psyche of the Caribbean it echoes and echoes reverberating through time.

The duality of religion is lost on the tourist ignorant of the posturing for power through transactions in symbols. The slave society had little reason to trust the God of the plantocrats or any institution that white men created, for nothing good under the sun had come from enslavement: "They have their necromancers and conjurers of both sexes ... to whom they apply for spells and charms against sickness, to prevent their being robbed, or to find out the thief, and to punish those who do them any injury."[111]

Slave owners sabotaged every aspect of African culture considered dangerous to effect this *natal alienation* in the construction of 'slaves'. Being a slave was to live a commuted death sentence where life was the 'gift' of the m[illegible][112] Africans were plucked from their tribes and relocated in a new land, a new economic and social structure. There was no cultural legitimacy for people who did not yet know their fellows through the deliberate scrambling of peoples under the age old principle of

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[111] Atwood 1791 in Abrahams and Szwed. *Ibid* 1983 p.21

[112] Natal alienation is a term Orlando Patterson(1982) uses to emphasize the essential nature of slave psychology. The slave is rendered socially and culturally dead.

'divide and rule'. Living a commuted life sentence, the slave was not only chattel at the behest of the master, but socially dead. Memories and fantasies could not be completely erased by the pain of the lash or the exhaustion of sweated labour, however, and there were secrets and worlds that only Africans knew.[113]

The New World was make-believe. No knowledge of history was attached to this soil except the destruction - of aboriginal people and jungle vegetation. Negro fantasy life changed and developed as illusions and politico-religious practices became attached to this ground of experience. In Trinidad, an island of immigrants, the vestiges of African power had created an underworld that had become many featured; a vision, beyond labour and more real than serfdom. An hierarchy of power and prettiness, of titles, flags and uniforms, kings and queens and courtiers. The planter, looking at his Negroes and seeing only Negroes, never knew the intricacies of of slave rituals or the intrigue of jealously guarded secret councils.[114]

> There were slaves and there were realities that were known *only* among slaves; and the knowledge of this *underworld* would have disturbed planters from Santo Domingo and the French Caribbean even more if they had been able to recognize the signs that pointed to insurrection. But who among them could have known that slaves dressing up in cast off clothes to dance, eat and 'jump up' were going beyond mimicry of European styles. Who could have known that the imbecilic slave

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[113] Noam Chomsky's imagery of deep structure - cultural memory; surface structure - ethnic expressions; goes somewhere towards illustrating the culturally linked unconscious / conscious psychological underpinnings of social institutions, religion and individual styles of the ethnic mosaic..melange of African slaves.

[114] V.S. Naipaul The Loss of El Dorado. 1969 p.250

> carter owned by Rosette Picton was *'playing dead to catch crapeau alive.'*[115]

The *carter* belonged to the world of the *day* but at *night* he was a *king* with courtiers, uniform, flag and a hat with a black cockade. The *carter* was intellectually dull, lazy and given to all the slave vices. But the *king* was everywhere the *carter* was *and the king was ever alert*. Messages were exchanged and carried by *young women*; carried along in the *songs* of chain gangs; carried under the cover of *slave anonymity* and the duplicity of singing and dancing towards rebellion or emancipation from below.[116]

Formal education is not a prerequisite for cherishing dreams of freedom and slaves sang of insurrection just as the Jews in Babylon sang of Zion. The *game* would be exposed when Dr. Metivier's sick wife, lying in bed, heard the *words* of a song being sung in *patois* and usually sung to the tune of a Roman Catholic chant to compound the layers of deception.[117]

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[115] V.S. Naipaul, *Ibid* 1969
This idiomatic phrase gives the image of the snake with its deadly poison feigning death to catch its prey. Its prey is *the frog* and the planters are *French*. Idiomatic expressions are powerfully damning and their strategic value must not be overlooked. The mouth duels with the lash. This will echo again in 1824 when women are excluded from corporal punishment. We all know about the art of applying poison among the slaves.
Rosette Smith was known as Rosette Picton but I have never seen any record of a marriage. It does not seem likely, but then the fact of this matter could be otherwise. Rosette was Picton's woman and she insisted on using her status to get what could be got from this fortunate coincidence of affections.

[116] Note the tradition of the ubiquitous slave, the carter, being the king of the underworld. Davis has seen that the modern 'king' in Haiti is often the chauffeur of political rulers ever listening in the corridors of power.

[117] Women knew the patois very well as they were in constant contact

'Bread is white man flesh;
wine is white man blood.
We going to drink white man blood.'[118]

The words were lost in the dancing and the rhythm of the chac chac pods; lost in the categories of Europe where songs are sung for different reasons.[119] *Women* slaves were *singing insurrection*. Singing voices in unison affirming individual participants in an expression of solidarity; many voices in one voice. The singing expresses power in group identity drawing boundaries that construct the oppressor as a figure in opposition to freedom, in opposition to their voice. The same force for solidarity and group strength is magnified in adding meter and dance.[120] Dr. Metivier's slaves turned informers.

> Towards the end of the year, namely, in December, a plot, or something resembling one, was discovered, or believed to be discovered, amongst the negroes of

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with privileged house slaves who cooked, cleaned, wet nursed their babies, were the children's nannies and so on. Mrs. Metivier may even have been a Free Coloured Creole as women were not necessarily as pale as their husbands. Women often held the linkages between the two cultures and those linkages went deeper than words, they were linked by blood and kin.

[118] Another song of insurrection will be heard by Mrs. Carmichael of Laurel Hill in 1833, the year of slave emancipation. Mrs. Carmichael has made a deliberate attempt to understand the world as the slave lived and so she could probe into the meaning of the words. A similar song is recorded by C.L.R. James among the Bantu in the 1940's which was the secret anthem of Africa p.18.

[119] Chac chac pods contained stones and were shaken to lend percussion for singing and dancing.

[120] This unity of expression has a force that is recognized by the military in having soldiers march, salute, parade and posture competence in precision co-operation.

> Trinidad. A revolt was to have commenced on Shand's estate. The conspirators, it is said, meditated the destruction of all the white men, and the dishonour of all the white women of the island. It seemed to have originated with some French and African negroes. I have inspected the papers of the courts-martial held on these people, and fully believe that their *judges* were convinced of their guilt. The result was, four slaves were executed, many were disgustingly mutilated, and a few were ordered to be flogged and banished.[121]

Governor Hislop sent troops to round up these mock-royals. The *monarchy* included the *carter* King Noel, Congo King, King Sampson, King Edward, King Herold, King Simon and King Baptiste.[122] This *mockery or game* ended in executions, beheadings and the spiked display of heads that had worn *crowns*. There were more slaves to go earless; then condemned to chain gangs and those to wear the marks of the whip after their punishment on the wrack. Samson's queen (a free woman) was 'to work in chains for ever' and to wear 'an iron ring of ten pounds to be affixed to one of her legs.' All the queens, princesses and dauphins, even those described as artless or playful or innocent, were to be whipped, thirty-nine lashes for some, twenty-five for the rest.

The inquiry went on beyond Christmas. The underground had been extensive; nearly everybody's Negroes were in it. Another Negro was hanged and beheaded. Six more had their ears cut off and were sold out of the island.[123] Many local inhabitants believed that the plot was fanned to an hysterical pitch by alarmists as those familiar with the culture of their slaves recognized that talk of Emperors, Kings, Queens and all the retinue of the French court, was associated with slave dances. And Dickson's pamphlet drew attention to the fact that the chief witness for the prosecution was "a mad woman".[124]

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[121] E.L. Joseph *IBid* 1838 pp.229-230

[122] These themes of monarchies are the themes of *carnival bands* and *playing mas* is serious stuff. A *carnival mentality* means something substantive in this context and it comes from somewhere very *deep* in the Afro-Caribbean reservoir of cultural expression. The calypso singers also continue this theme of monarchy in their titles, e.g. Fransico Slinger is *The Mighty Sparrow*. This too is idiomatic; this too is posturing in the traffic of symbolic power; persuasion.

In the politics of the early 19th century this was the kind of drama that was conjured with to prolong slavery and undermine the efforts of abolitionists at Westminster. But news of this plot did not stop the tide and the abolition of the British Slave Trade received royal assent in March 1806, and became law in January 1807.[125]

Poison and Politics: Towards Abolition

The slave world was harsh and slaves accommodated to unceasing brutality by adopting a fatalistic philosophy and wooden stupidity in the face of their overlords. Many slaves escaped mentally by withdrawing into catatonia; never moving without the sting of the whip to smart their flesh. There was marronage in more activities than the flight of maroons to the hills; marronage existed wherever a slave was able to escape the construction of natal alienation or social death. The peace of the planter's night was intruded on by the beating drums and the dancing that would not disappear in spite of every effort made to suppress this link with the *heart beat* of Africa. There were those with the gift of focusing on the hypocrisy of the system while playing into the image of the buffoon or fool as portrayed in this vignette: "Why do you ill treat your mule in that way?" asked a colonist to a carter. "But when I do not work, I am beaten, when de does not work, I beat him - he is my negro..."[126] And there were those whose 'wooden stupidity' was born of despair.

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[123] V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 p.256

[124] E.L. Joseph *Ibid* 1838 p.230.
In Wade Davis's book on the secret societies of Haiti, the Voodoun network extends the dance beyond entertainment. And indeed, the courts of the slaves may have been held in like fashion. Where better for plans to be hatched and plotted than at 'dances'.

[125] Michael Anthony Profile Trinidad 1975 p.75

We learn from the historical record of poisonings; of a paramour who failed to woo his desired slave woman and on the counsel of an obeah practitioner, tried to impregnate her *calloused* hand with a love potion. Her neck swelled and she showed signs of poisoning but it was concluded that her hands were too calloused to apply any poison. A few days later she menstruated and it was concluded that her swelling was an *hysterical* reaction brought on by fear of poisoning. And that she would recover after her period.[127]

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[126] C.L.R. James *Ibid* p.15

[127] This is an early diagnosis of a *woman's complaint* and so we might suspect that the slaves brought with them their ideas around menstruation. In my study there is the continual reference to cleansing and purging. Menstruation is linked with bad blood being cleansed from the

We also learn of the poisoning of a master's child by a favourite house slave. The story tells us that the master's paternity is acknowledged by all and the child is prized by all. The poisoner is a trusted slave and the closest slave to his master. The story goes that he was jealous of this infant rival for his master's affections. He gives himself up because the baby's death was so horrible that general bereavement by all the other slaves caused the poisoner to break the secret and end the silence. The poisoner is poisoned and we do not know who administered the fatal dose: was it suicide or homicide in this world where poisoning was an art that was known to obeah practitioners and their apprentices. We do not know whether a homicide would indicate that this slave was now dangerous because he had become *known* or whether this was a baby's death avenged. But we do know that there were poisonings at the top of the animal chain as well as among the costly animals and 'slave stock' on plantations. Appealing to the sentiments of the master led to the conclusion that the poisonings were done by a loyal slave who would kill to be first in the master's affections and take his own life to restore honour.[128]

Poison: The history of slavery overflows with poison. It was the

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body. Sexual intercourse is refrained from during the holy days when women have to be *pure*. This will emerge as a theme more and more among the women, even those who are not Spiritual Baptists (Shouters) or members of the Shango cult. The common problem of blood pressure was also seen as *too much blood* that could be suggested early by heavy menstrual bleeding and not having the right number of babies.

128. Images of Cane in the cane fields of the Caribbean.

incidiousness of the poison that never ceased through all the brutal efforts to control it. And the dialogue between the secrets of the poisoners and the plantocrats plunged all into a diabolical discourse that was married to this West Indian triumvirate of planter, free person and slave.

> A mistress would poison a rival to retain the valuable affections of her inconstant owner. A discarded mistress would poison master, wife, children and slaves. A slave robbed of his wife by one of his masters would poison him, and this was one of the most frequent causes of poisoning. If a planter conceived a passion for a young slave, her mother would poison his wife with the idea of placing her daughter at the head of the household. The slaves would poison the younger children of a master in order to ensure the plantation succeeded to one son. By this means they prevented the plantation being broken up and the gang dispersed. On certain occasions that slaves decimated their number by poison so as to keep the number of slaves small and prevent their masters embarking on larger schemes which would increase the work. For this reason a slave would poison his wife, another would poison his children, and a Negro nurse declared that for years she had poisoned every child that she brought into the world....The most dreadful of all this cold-blooded murder was, however, the jaw-sickness - a disease which attacked children only, in the first few days of their existence. ...The Negro midwives alone could cause it, and it is believed they performed some simple operation on the newly born child which resulted in the jaw-sickness. Whatever the method this disease caused the death of nearly one third of the children born on the plantations.[129]

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129. C.L.R. James Black Jacobins 1938 pp.16-17
Michael Craton "A Doctor's Views on Childbirth, Infant Mortality, and the General Health of His Slave Charges, 1788" in Searching for the Invisible Man 1978 This doctor "does not conceive the Tetanus or Locked jaw to be a disease common to Infants in the part where he practices;..he apprehends there may be reason to suppose that a Symptom which generally attends approaching Death, ..a paralysis of the Muscle of the Lower Jaw, has been frequently mistaken by People unacquainted with Medicine, for Tetanus, as he has often observed the same name to be given in common discourse to both those Afflictions though of so very different a Nature." p.396

Suicide: Suicide was all too common among new arrivals, especially among the Ibos and such was their disregard for life that they killed themselves, not for personal reasons, but in order to spite their owner or thwart plans that implicated their crew.[130] Life was hard and death they believed, meant not only release but a return to Africa. Those who wished to believe and to convince the world that the slaves were half human brutes, fit for nothing else but slavery, could find ample evidence for their faith, and in nothing so much as in this homicidal mania of the slaves. Death was shrouded in different hues among slaves just as the meaning of death changes in times of war and peace so too, it changes in the religious symbols of slave culture. When life is cheap the concept of death is robbed of grief by the very frequency of its occurrence. For the slave, however, premature death left the spirit of the dead vulnerable to the magic of the conjurer and thus the powers of the spirits of the dead were more

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130. Wade Davis *Ibid* 1986 noted that Plantation owners had preferences when buying slaves "The Senegalese were highly regarded for their superior morality and taciturn character - an ironic assessment for the slavers to make - whereas the people from Sierra Leone and the Ivory and Gold Coasts were considered a stubborn group likely to revolt and desert. The Ibos of the southern Slave Coast of what is now Nigeria worked well but were prone to suicide. The people from the Congo and Angola were highly regarded, and large numbers of them were imported. But it was the peoples bought along the Slave Coast that were preferred above all other, and much of the European slave trade concentrated there. Such was the scale of the trade that in the Kingdom of Dahomey it became a national industry, with the economy of the entire country based on annual expeditions against neighbouring peoples. Many of the captured victims - Nagos, Mahis, and Aradas of the western Yoruba, among others - were taken down the Niger, and there they fell into the hands of a notorious and opportunistic tribe of traders, the Efik of Old Calabar." p.44

potent than the heaving body of the slave.[131]

Much has been written about the world as it was seen by Europeans, but the world constructed out of the experiences of slaves at the turn of the 19th century remained as essentially *anonymous* as the Amerindian world that passed away three centuries before on this very same soil. The silence is only disturbed by reports of the abrasive acts by recalcitrants and rebels who were noted because they had somehow to brought into abeyance and dealt with.

The historical record of slavery towards abolition is littered with evidence of slave resistance, rebellion and for many the ultimate price of despair made martyrs of men and women who escaped their mortal bondage by taking their own lives, or destroying their offspring, or facing execution for daring to rebel. The disturbing tales of slaves eating dirt to destroy themselves, the *mal de stomach* was the ultimate revenge on a Roman Catholic owner. For in this act of suicide, a martyr was made and a valuable slave was lost. The symbolic aspect of this act of defiance was sifted through the structures of catholicism and the concept of soul. Suicide paid poor dividends both on earth and on High for the planter owner while the slave believed that death was but a passage back to Africa and new life. Two cultural systems of religious beliefs were conjured to life when death had to be reckoned with. And the propaganda surrounding death made both martyrs and tyrants in the mental life of the plantation economy. The double edge of guilt and innocence plagued both sides towards an end where *slavery* would be condemned as an evil that the conscience of Britain's voting majority could no longer tolerate.

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[131] See C.L.R. James Black Jacobins 1938, 1963 pp.15-16
Wade Davis The Serpent and the Rainbow 1986 "death like life, stretches far beyond the temporal limits of the body...Death is not defined just by the passing of the flesh, but as the moment when all the spiritual components find their proper destination. Thus the vodoun adept, believing in the immortality of the spirit, fears death not for its finality but because it is a critical and dangerous passage during which the five vital aspects of man dissociate, leaving the ti bon ange, in particular, vulnerable to capture by the sorcerer." p.218

4. Abolition of the Slave Trade 1807

In 1807 the British Slave Trade was abolished but in Trinidad the reality did not admit this legal formality. From the time the slave trade was officially abandoned the concealment and duplicity of the plantocrats was brought into effect. African negroes were bought on credit and rushed in to the colony for anyone who would buy them. Slaves from Guinea were hastily got. Hislop was constrained by the confusion as to the laws in Trinidad at the time as the Slave Code drafted by Picton in 1800 was yet to be ratified and the humane Spanish laws of 1789 had not been passed by the court of audiencia at Caracas. This meant in effect, that the laws of 1783 were the only valid laws of the time. Thus, the Case of Le Bis in 1809 became a travesty of justice. A French surgeon called LeBis committed the cliche of abolitionist propaganda. One m[illegible] whipped one of his Negroes to death 'before breakfast', and said that he hadn't broken any law. He appeared to be right.....All that Governor Hislop and Judge Smith could do was to fine LeBis $150 for *'treating his slave unskillfully in his capacity of surgeon.'*[132]

This confusion of legal codes made justice very haphazard for the slaves. But the interpretations of the laws did not jeopardize the privileges of plantocrats.

The story that seemed to take on mythic proportions in eclipsing the feminine ideal and the brutal white male slave owner in the stereotyped corners of my mind, was the case of the free woman of colour, Betsy Diggins... "*well known* even to people like Picton and the Baron de Montalembert for her brutality towards the few Negroes she owned..."

> (She) accused an Indian, a Carib from St Vincent, of stealing some salt-fish and flour. She got some Negroes, men and women, her own as well as the neighbours', to hunt the Indian down. She tied the Indian up in her yard and tortured him. For much of the night her free Negro neighbour 'heard screamings and melancholy groans'. In the morning people who went to Betsy's yard 'to buy bread' saw the mutilated Indian tied to a post and lying face down on the ground. Some of them told Betsy, 'the mongrel woman', that the Indian was a free man, not one of her own Negroes, and she would get into trouble....But two or three days later Betsy and her two Negroes, one a creole .. the other a new Ibo Negro, dragged the Indian down to the ravine and stoned him to death. Then Betsy herself cut up the body with a cutlass.[133]

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[132] E.L. Joseph *Ibid* 1838 pp.238-9; V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 p.281

[133] V.S. Naipaul 1969 p.282
Note: Indians in those days were known mainly by their catatonia, their mindlessness and their passivity. However, among the slaves the Indians were known as hunters of runaway slaves who were skilled in the arts of the jungle ways of tracking game and hunting down their prey. Betsy was known to be cruel but why would she have so many accomplices? Just a thought.

Betsy was arrested and deposited in the gaol with the galley slaves.[134] It seemed odd that this torture was witnessed by so many 'customers' over a period of 3 days. When the Great Fire of 24th March, 1808 burnt down the gaol, Betsy made good her escape. She found her way to London and there claimed immunity from English laws under the same loophole that had exonerated the murderer, LeBis. How she paid her passage and her London lawyer on this voyage to liberty is yet another 'mystery'.

The scandal that accompanied Betsy Diggins was another example of infamy on an island where the very institution of slavery made brutality and terror as mundane as the bureaucracy that held it together. A depressed Hislop would write to Miranda:

> 'In the last six years, I have seen more of the infamy and turpitude of mankind than I have seen in the rest of my life. Generally colonies are peopled by refuse of the Mother Country, but Trinidad is peopled by the refuse of other colonies'.[135]

5. Establishment of an English Merchantile Class

During Hislop's Government the main immigrants, apart from the disastrous experiment with Chinese 'peasants', were slaves from Africa.[136] There were Free Coloured immigrants from the Spanish mainland,[137] English carpet baggers merchants and petty officials, soldiers and clerks, plus slaves and Free Coloured immigrants from the British West Indies. Trinidad was a nation of immigrants and turn of the century Port of Spain was intrigued by another set of new arrivals:

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[134] These would have been the slaves who worked in the galleys of ships. This was their accommodation while the ship was anchored. The slave was living a commuted *life sentence*. This would fit into Orlando Patterson's theory of slaver as social death.

[135] V.S. Naipaul 1969 p.285

> In the Spanish-French-African city of planters, launch captains, soldiers, slaves, whores, keepers of grog-shops and retail shops selling salt, tobacco and fried meat for peons, the early English immigrants had been new and startling. They were too grand for the setting: they looked absurd, ignorant and gullible. They were distinguished not only by their wealth and commercial adventurousness (sometimes folly), their clothes, the ritual of their English style meals and the other emblems of a finer domestic self-cherishing, but also by their intellectual liveliness - the threats of letters to London lawyers and newspapers, the affirmation of rights and freedoms - was a carry-over from the metropolis. In the slave society, where self fulfillment came so easily, this liveliness began to be perverted and then to fade, and the English saw their pre-eminence, more simply, as a type of racial magic. The English in Trinidad became like the French. The quality of controversy declined, and the stature of men. What was left was a colony.[138]

The English merchants and carpet baggers were changing the Ethnic composition of the white population in the local ethnography, but the French would hold on to the powers and privileges they had acquired. Borde's L'Histoire de L'Ile de la Trinidad sous le gouvernement Espagnol, depicts the French inhabitants in their magnificence and aristocratic grandeur. The fact that most Europeans tolerated this island for its promise of quick fortune and hopes of respectability and acceptance back in the metropol, is lost in descriptions of taste and *good breeding*. According to Borde, the French of Trinidad were:...authorized to wear the sword of Louis XIV... a veritable aristocracy of colour no whit less urbane or distinguished than an *aristocracy of blood*.[139] They had not lost their attachment to the metropol but time and distance from the fashions of Europe had meant that the process of Creolization was rooting them to their plantations. French women had adapted local meats and vegetables to the satisfaction of the French palate, while the wine was imported from Bordeaux:

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[136] It has to be kept in mind that that the British Slave Trade was abolished in 1807 so there was a rush for slaves at this time.

[137] Trinidad is just 7 miles off the coast of the Spanish-main. It was British and so it could be used as a jumping off point for revolutionaries (like Miranda).

[138] V.S. Naipaul 1969 p.316

> The women, following the style of Bordeaux, wore white, but adorned their heads and necks with brightly coloured 'madras' and foulard. The older men continued to wear culottes, with pigtail or powdered hair, though the young men took to the pantaloon which was becoming popular in France at the turn of the century.
> ...Life was a round of balls and concerts, lunches and fine dinners, hunting and fishing parties; carnival which lasted from Christmas to Ash Wednesday was a series of fetes and pleasure making. Natural vivaciousness and the most catching gaiety presided at these amusements; each sought to outdo the other in amiability. Like brilliant rockets, witty words shot forth, happy sallies, and comic pantomime which gave food for the conversations of the morrow.[140]

Much is written about the balls, dinners, musical and theatrical performances, hunting parties (for game and *runaway slaves*,[141]

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[139] Quoted in Pearce 1956, p.530

[140] La Borde quoted in Anthony de Verteuil *Ibid* 1973, pp.21-22.

) but the veneer of refined elegance and near perfect countenance of the French plantocracy is marred by ugly vignettes that say much about cruelty and violence among their own in the domestic context.

> A French woman complained late one night that she had just been beaten by her husband and feared for her life. 'Go and take the fellow', Smith[142] said to his aguazils, 'and lodge him in jail'. The 'fellow' was an interpreter. He stayed in the 'nauseous filth' of the jail for six months, among the galley Negroes. Then he was brought up to Smith's house, told to pay 1,000 dollars, or get off the island, or go back to jail. He went back to jail.[143]

It is true that the gaol was not the place to find the wealthy French rogues as the gaol was an institution to serve the interests of (French) planters, but all the indications of domestic violence in the main house as well as the barrack yards, are there in the literature. Women fetched the whip or had their domestic

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141. Anthony de Verteuil Sir Louise de Verteuil: His life and times Trinidad 1800-1900 1973 writes that "Sometimes a jewel of a short story is found embedded in the longer *recits* as for instance *La Chasse Aux Marrons* probably by Leon de Gannes" where a runaway slave in captured by some incompetent hunters when out for the sport happened on "a poor sickly man" and his master before council ordered that the fugitive should have his leg cut off. "Good Lord!" cried the man. "Yes, that leg still not well, cut it off." There and then, the man was made to lie down on the iron table and drink a glass of wine and the old surgeon finished the matter with tree sweeps of the saw. After the fugitive recovered "he was promoted to the rank of Captain of the mill, and was delighted with his new self and new state. He found this to be much better than roaming through the high woods and being devoured by worms. Everything is for the best in this the best of all possible worlds." p.77

142. Smith was responsible for the enforcement of Spanish law in Trinidad where there were two systems of law; Spanish and British.

143. V.S. Naipaul 1969, pp.290-291

slaves professionally punished, while husbands and lovers resorted to violence to settle conflicts with wives and mistresses. Not all slave women would have welcomed the master-turned paramour and so one might imagine that private violence was part of the life of the times just as it remains so. While the upper crust practiced manners and studied the art of fine conversation and prized themselves on their majesty with the waltz, the society's underpinnings were frought with violence and emotions erupted into the forms that were familiar. One is left in doubt as to the ideas of sanctity in the home...in Trinidad.

In the early nineteenth century the French upper crust would be diluted by incoming English planters and merchants. However, the folkways were predominantly French and Spanish. The government was anxious to keep ties with the powerful Catholic Church cordial.[144] The free coloured planters were predominantly Catholic and French in dress, customs, language and cuisine. The more successful free coloureds, according to Borde (1876) built fashionable town houses in Port of Spain but legislation remained discriminatory. However, the segregated free coloured population formed a micro-society (that reflected the values of the parallel white establishment) in which there was jealous scrutiny of status, rank, and codes of observance in formal conduct.

The artisan class, again predominantly French, enjoyed rapid social advancement in the post capitulation entrepreneurial development period. Local knowledge and success in a society little known for honest, law abiding or humane practices in economic management, would probably indicate that there were accomplished rogues among the ranks of the affluent free coloured people. Under Picton, the free coloured sector had to go underground as this group was touted as dangerous and inspired by Jacobin revolutionaries. Those privileges that could be stripped by changing codes of conduct, were.[145]

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[144] This would come to an abrupt end with MacLeod the Protestant Governor refusing to link Government and Church. See de Verteuil.

The campaign for a British Colonial Constitution envisaged an elected assembly where votes would be cast by white males only.[146] The free coloureds' rights would be 'safeguarded' by an assembly where their numbers would have no representation. When the successful campaign for British Colonial Government looked ominous, representatives of the free-coloured community drew up a petition requesting permission to address the king:

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[145] 1. They no longer received commissions in the Militia;
2. The office of Alquazil...feared by slave and despised by white, was ascribed exclusively to them;
3. The 'fandango license'...was passed (in order to hold a dancing party, a free coloured person had to obtain permission. If a slave was in attendance, the fine was $25.)
4. During the long struggle to decide whether Trinidad should be governed under Spanish law, or should adopt a form of British Colonial Constitution, the free coloured felt themselves particularly threatened by the demands of the latter, not merely because they feared the loss of privileges, but because they feared the racist temper of the 'English Party'.
Andrew Pearce 1956 p.533.

[146] The grand attempt at procuring British laws for this island..on Sept 30, 1809, a liberal subscription was entered by white inhabitants to petition his Majesty for British laws. Dr. Alexander Williams was president and Mr. John Lewis was secretary. It was agreed to send George Know, barrister at law, to England, as a deputy..Contrary to Knox's advice, the committee wished to keep the coloured people from participating in the advantages of British laws, which would make them worse off than they ever were. E.L. Joseph *Ibid* 1838 p.242

> "...a dutiful, loyal and affectionate address imploring him to extend unto them, under whatever system of jurisprudence His Royal wisdom may deem most expedient for the future of government of the colony, such a participation in its operation as may secure them their personal security and social happiness."[147]

The petition was signed by 236 men but Hislop refused this request and immediately appointed a commission to investigate the people whose signatures appeared on the petition. The governor's sentiments, however, did not interfere with bureaucratic routines and the petition was duly dispatched to the Secretary of State along with other matters of colonial government.

> On the 13th of June, 1811, Mr. Marryat introduced two motions in the House of Commons - one to give this island British laws, and the other to grant Trinidad a British constitution...Those who successfully opposed these motions were armed with arguments by the excluded coloured people. Mr. Stephen observed that "what was proposed was, that the house should accede to the wishes of 517 white inhabitants, in opposition to the wishes of 22,000."[148]

The British Government was opposed to the idea of unbridled development using slave labour and abolitionists viewed the island as an excellent candidate for experimenting with race relations and small scale agricultural units. As an experimental colony decisions and policies were created in London for implementation in Trinidad.[149]

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[147] Andrew Pearce 1956 p.533.

[148] This was a wild exaggeration of the population figures, but the point is made. E.L. Joseph *Ibid* 1838 p.234

There was no elected assembly to oppose unpopular legislation and any legislation that improved conditions for slaves usually symbolized ruin in the offing for planters and the sugar based economy. Slave owners adopted subversive strategies in their efforts to counter liberal trends. Slaves were introduced from older British colonies and foreign islands to be sold in Trinidad. James Stephen Senior leading an abolitionist cause, pressed for *compulsory registration of slaves* in British colonies to check illegal traffic in African people.

6. Registration of Slaves 1812

On 26th March 1812, a royal cedula was passed in England which enforced the establishment of a registry of slaves. An *Ordinance in Council March 1812* introduced the system for recording changes in the slave population (by death, birth, manumission or sale). No measure had been so unpopular or aroused so much discontent as this *interference* in the relationship between owners and slaves. Efficient implementation was thwarted by negligence and local opposition which were similar guerrilla tactics as we recognize among the resisting slaves.

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[149] 'Trinidad is a subject for an anatomy school or rather a poor patient in a county hospital on which all sorts of surgical experiments are tried, to be given up if they fail and to be practiced on others if they succeed'. A Colonial Office Wit, 1812, quoted in Brereton 1981 p.52.

At the end of 1813, *25,717* slaves had been recorded. Sir Ralph Woodford had to admit that *4441* slaves were registered after the deadline date, a number hard to explain by any natural causes in a society where *slave deaths exceeded slave births*. The majority of Trinidad slaves were African born (13980 from Africa and 11629 Creole. Of the Creole slaves, 60% were born in Trinidad and the rest were from other West Indian islands). If anything, the registration order made it necessary for local planters to be consciously devious on a matter of law. Mortality figures and low fertility rates among slaves left officials in no doubt about the treatment of slaves being harsh. Between 1813 and 1834 (registration and emancipation) the slave population declined by 32 per cent. Meanwhile, abolitionist propaganda detailed cliches of brutality for the unimaginative who needed to be shown the faces between the lines of mortality statistics.

At the time of abolition (1807) the plantation based economies were dependent on slave labour and without this vital component, the outlook was bleak. The planters saw each step in the direction of citizenship for the slave population as a step towards disaster and ultimate ruin for them. In this context, the planter depended on the slave population's own increase to provide labour for a system that benefited planters. In spite of the propaganda, recognizably English, that abolition would be unfair to slaves and that Africans were stolen from a fate that would be so much worse if it had not been for their capture by traders to British planters[150] . The nature of the 'lady' or 'gentleman' was immodestly

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inflated with virtues scarcely witnessed by the 'fortunate' Africans whose burials were followed by a 'nine days' ritual gathering (wake) to celebrate the belief that the dead person had 'reached' Africa.[151]

In a climate where breeding would have to take over the role of 'restocking' the slave population, one might expect the role of female slaves to change markedly. This new dimension as breeder would allowed opportunities for women to bargain for more humane conditions. It had become important for planters to be mindful of a female slave's health or 'reproductive potential'.

Michael Craton's Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica (1978) showed that female slaves on Worthy Park in 1795 had not prospered from the amelioration law of 1787 that gave them the privilege of remaining away from the fields if they produced 6 or more children. Before Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807, it was so exceptionally rare for a female slave would have 6 living children that benevolence in the law was rarely tested. Miscarriages and early deaths concluded approximately 80% of slave births. On Worthy Park only one woman had 3 children living, and three women had two living. Thus any

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150. The Pro-slavery philosophy was well supported by the well to do in England. James Anthony Froude 1887 and Thomas Carlyle of that same period, Trolloppe...but a direct reference is in Froude. Another place to look is on pro-slavery philosophies in Gordon Lewis 1983.

151. Edith Clarke has a very elaborate description of funeral rites in the appendix of My Mother who Fathered Me(1957) Have a look in Martha Beckwith Black Roadways (1920s) and Edward Braithwaite Contradictory Omens (1974) Gerome Handler and Frederick W. Lange Plantation Slavery in Barbados: An Archaeological and Historical Investigation. 1978

reward offered to slave women with 6 children living was rarely, if ever, the reason for a field labourers to exempt themselves from duty.[152]

Matthew Gregory Lewis in Journal of a West India Proprietor (London, 1834) not suspecting poison as the cause of tetanus in newborn slaves, described how a slave woman's "thoughtlessness for five minutes had killed her infant"...

> This woman was a tender mother, had borne ten children, and yet has now but one alive: another, at present in the hospital, has borne seven, and but one has lived to puberty; and the instances of those who have had four, five, six children, without succeeding in bringing up one, in spite of the utmost attention and indulgence, are very numerous; so heedless and inattentive are the best-intentioned mothers, and so subject in this climate are infants to dangerous complaints. The locked jaw is the common and most fatal one."[153]

The resistance that women slaves engaged in was a profound statement indeed on the evil of slavery. Whether mortality figures were produced by poison, poverty, despair or disease, the ethics of human conduct must be understood from within the contours of the plantation economy and all that it meant to produce sugar and spice in the West Indies.

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[152] See Bridget Brereton "Women and Slavery in the British West Indies" pp.8-11. Trinidad and Tobago Review Immortelle 1985.

[153] From Roger Abrahams and John F Szwed.(Eds) After Africa: Extracts from British Travel Accounts and Journals of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries concerning the Slaves, their Manners, and Customs in the British West Indies. p.339.
"The most dreadful of all cold blooded murder was, however, the jaw sickness - a disease which attacked children only, in the first days of their existence. Their jaws were closed to such an extent that it was impossible to open them and to get anything down, with the result that they died of hunger. It was not a natural disease and never attacked children delivered by white women. The Negro midwives alone could cause it, and it is believed they performed some simple operation on the newly born child which resulted in the jaw-sickness. Whatever the method this disease caused the death of nearly one third of the children born on the plantations." C.L.R. James Black Jacobins 1963 pp.16-17.

African traditions were used by women as vehicles for expressing cultural distance and as forms of resistance to slave owners when other avenues of acquiring cheap labour were legislated against and laws were passed to encourage slave women to breed. Pregnant women were excused from field labour as the birth date approached; a crime punishable by death would be commuted until after the birth; breast feeding mothers were given extra food rations and lighter duties. In other words this meant material margins of advantage. The cultural authenticity of women's child bearing and child rearing rituals were suspect, but their political value in the struggle for survival was impeccable. The slave mother had become a strength among the powers of the weak and the anatomy of planter power had a point of vulnerability that could be exploited by the people who listened to the tales of Anansy and other African folktales.

The object of slavery was productive coercive labour and the most effective resistance was to frustrate production by demarcating minimum effort before punishment. Women could not work in the field when they were sick, breast feeding or about to give birth; but it seems as though they were able to labour in their garden plots and sell their surplus at the markets at these times. A woman's earnings were her own and her low productivity was a very successful subversive strategy. The 'mother family' had a definite advantage in a society that relied on women to restock the ranks of slaves. This unit allowed women to protect themselves from relationships that would erode their own interests.

Another reason that may account for prolonging Breast feeding was prolonged may have been the link with low fertility during the period of lactation. Suckling mothers in polygamous tribes, however, were immune from sexual contact. So the patriarchal belief structures of Africa and Europe may have been manipulated to mothers' sound social and economic advantage. She was not only anonymous as a 'mere' slave, but a woman with all that the latter implied. She had a margin of ambiguity to wield.

The nuclear family unit would hardly be the crowning of virtue for a slave woman with a marginalized male even if this family form had been part of ancestral cultural arrangements in tribal villages. This child centred focus may have had a subversive dimension that interphased African cultural traditions and European traditions. Attention given to the well-being of women may also have caused owners to detect signs of 'human-being' among them in much the same was as a stud farmer gets attached to the good breeder and begins to sympathize with the animal in labour. However, it would be completely false to assume that slave owners suddenly became nurturant and generous fools in the hands of 'amazons'.

The constant vigilance of plantocrats put slaves and owners in a cat and mouse cycle where wits were strained to protect interests and treasure margins of freedom in an institution that denied any sense of personhood. Slave handling principles were not based on a philosophy of paternalistic benevolence of pro-slavery propaganda, but on profits from sugar. Abolition ended the legally sanctioned slave trade which caused hardship to planters, as the 'black market' was expensive and smuggled slaves were not always as healthy as their price might suggest.[154] But until the sea captains took less interest in profits and more interest in policing the trade, there were slaves to be bought. The cost of keeping slave mothers healthy and reproductive was weighed against the price of illegal slaves and the productivity of existing slaves. For the owner, *the slaves were units of capital and expenditure was seen as cost plus investment.* A slave could be 'put in a master's pocket' at the whim of the owner and every slave was powerfully aware of the limits of tolerance and just how far they could push their own interests in the currency of survival. Slave women were slaves first, and another two decades of illegal trading in slaves would ensure that the powers of motherhood were kept very weak. By the end of slavery, however, the capital gained through motherhood was visible.

According to Lucille Mathurin Mair's **Women Field Workers in Jamaica During Slavery** (1987), even when children under 6 years of age were 'free' they could be employed on estates with the mother's consent. However, "A greater insult could not be offered to a mother than by asking her free child to work... The Select

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[154] Locate the story of Captain Mitchell offloading a shipment of slaves who were so neglected and starving that they died soon after they were sold.

Committee of the House of Commons on the working of the Apprenticeship system reported... Negro mothers have been known to say, pressing their child to their bosoms, 'we would rather see them die, than become apprentices'." Thus, it was that in Jamaica 1834, of the 39,013 children under 6 years of age, only 9 were given consent by mothers to work during the 4 year apprenticeship.[155]

7. Cessation of Slave Imports Bill of 1817

The Bill of 1817 was designed to stop the importation of slaves from well populated regions like Barbados. Slave holders entering the island were allowed only their personal domestic slaves however, the traffic 'certified by the Office of the Registry to be legally imported' suggests that Sir Ralph Woodford was at least tacitly in agreement with local interests as opposed to metropolitan interests.

Under Governor Woodford (1813-29) Port of Spain[156] would be regularly laid out, the Anglican and Roman Catholic Cathedrals would be built, the streets of mud would be covered with gravel and some elements of town planning would become evident in the former wood and tapia town. In 1825 Henry Nelson Coleridge's observations of the city made light of the discrimination against the population of Free coloured Trinidadians (81% of the free population) and described the languages 'he' heard spoken in Trinidad as *'foreign'*:

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[155] From Douglas Hall "The apprenticeship period in Jamaica, 1834-1838." Caribbean Quarterly, 3:3,1953 in Lucille Mathurin Mair's 1986 Elsa Govia Memorial Lecture (1987) p.11.

[156] Port-of-Spain had been destroyed by fire in 1808 and so reconstruction was proceeding apace.

> The Spanish and French females, their gay costume, their *foreign* language, their unusual vivacity give this market the appearance of a merry fair in *France*. The Protestant Church..beautifully situated...surrounded on two sides by the best houses in town. The church itself is one of the most elegant and splendid things in the empire;...and the pews are arranged with not more regularity than with a liberal consideration of the feelings of the coloured people. These last sit in the area towards the western end, and the difference of their accommodation from that of the whites is scarcely perceptible.[157]

Coleridge is obviously speaking as a visitor as it would be very apparent to local free coloured people that their accommodation was different no matter how 'imperceptible' this might appear to a visiting Englishman who found their French language 'foreign'. Meanwhile, Fugitives from both sides of Bolivar's War of Liberation in Venezuela came by canoe to the town.[158] The lowest class of these immigrants, *peons* did manual seasonal work on the cocoa estates or became woodcutters or hunters. 'Delicate

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[157] Henry Nelson Coleridge 1825 *Ibid* p.67.

[158] E.L. Joseph *Ibid* 1838: Simon Bolivar had emancipated and armed his slaves, and was still struggling (in 1813) amidst the off-shots of the mighty Andes. He was a worthy successor of Miranda, who for 39 years never remitted his endeavours to liberate his country....Since the days of Gual, Sanchez, and Espana, in 1797, Trinidad was ever the asylum of the defeated yet not disheartened insurgents...Trinidad continued to be the asylum of the defeated patriots. pp.244-45.

Spanish ladies and little children sometimes landed, their pitiable condition ensuring an outflow of sympathy from the planters.'[159]

Sir Ralph Woodford administered the colony as a Spanish viceroy, armed with absolute authority and has often been compared with Picton in style and character. Those who approved of arbitrary rule for the interests of the plantocracy, approved of both governors. He censored the press and appointed planters as the protectors of missions and slaves. The Chevalier de Verteuil, for example, was appointed as a Commandant and was responsible for administering the Ordinance regulating the treatment of slaves.[160] The fact that Commandants were themselves planters may have led one to suspect a conflict of interests in interpreting the Ordinance.

8. Order of Council September 16 1822

When Sir Ralph Woodford resumed government in 1823 after a 2 year absence... "The whole town was in motion, drums beating, horses galloping, the whites giggling, whilst the face of every coloured man, woman, and child bore the unequivocal expression of discontent, sorrow or fear."[161] The immediate cause of discontent was the Order in Council of 1822 which included such punishments as working in chains and corporal punishment for petty offences.[162] "It can scarcely, therefore, be surprising, considering the class from which the Alcaldes come alone be elected, the gradual increase of the tendency towards English (Colonial) Legislation, and the undoubted hostility shewn towards them as a body by the dominant class, that the coloured people in Trinidad 1822-3 were dissatisfied with their position."

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[159] Anthony de Verteuil *Ibid* 1973 p.15.

[160] There were standards of accommodation,clothing, working hours and provision of land for garden plots. The slave owner was to care for the sick and instruct the slaves in Christian codes of conduct. If punishment exceeded regulations stipulated after 1815 , the owner would be prosecuted and the slave sold to a person of known humanity.

Under the governorship of Sir Ralph Woodford the free coloured population was in for a new round of oppression. This was a reaction to movements in place to serge for equality with the white population. In 1822 free coloureds could be imprisoned and flogged for petty misdemeanours and trivial infractions of the code. The re-introduction of flogging for free coloured people was deliberate and symbolic of humiliations suffered, too recently for them, under slavery. The person of colour was deliberately addressed without the courtesy of titles by Woodford and government clerks. It apparently incensed Woodford that the wealth of white fathers was passing into the hands of their coloured sons, and he did all that was in his power to prevent marriages between white men and coloured women. In fact, many couples found it more convenient to go to Grenada to have their nuptuals performed.

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161. Dr. J. B. Phillip Free Mulatto pp.259 quoted in L.M. Fraser *Ibid* Vol 2, 1896 p.143

162. Police regulations of 1822 included - landing from a vessel without permission, -dancing after 9.00 p.m. without police sanction, walking in the streets after 10.00 p.m. L.M. Fraser *Ibid* Vol 2, 1896 p.146

For coloured men who entered the professions a special set of standards was created[163]:

> Coloured doctors had to pay a license to practice while whites were granted them freely. Dr. Francis Williams, who had been born in slavery and whose mother was still a slave, was denied a license...although he had graduated from a British University, simply because of his slave birth. ...St.Luce Philip, the only doctor with a university degree in the whole southern district, was forced to serve in the militia as a private, while white 'doctors' without degrees were commissioned as surgeon or lieutenant.[164]
>
> In 1821 Woodford issued a schedule of fees for doctors that discriminated between the fees paid for the same kinds of medical care for whites, free coloured and slaves.[165]

The deliberate oppression of free coloured people under Woodford galvanized members for another series of protest towards their equality, and the best place to attack discrimination was from London. In 1824 Jean Baptiste Philip published anonymously A Free Mulatto, a brilliant document of protest to present to Secretary of State Bathurst. Philip was able to capture the Psychological dimension of oppression that strengthened the docu-

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163. Negative discrimination would turn around in the post- emancipation period. We will catch this thread in Wood with the tale of the Medical Superintendent of Chacachacare.

164. Fr. de Ridder was also involved in pamphlet writing and it was suspected that coloured members of the militia were plotting at his house to gain recognition..another subversive activity associated with Francis de Ridder. His most awful challenge was for a school for coloured children. see Campbell and de Verteuil for opposing views on de Ridder. It would be worthwhile inserting a little on the struggles of Fr. de Ridder for the free-coloured population and the price he paid in efforts to address the promotion of this sector of the population. Also the important function of the church in the promotion of equal rights and abolition.

165. Bridget Brereton *Ibid* 1981 pp.56-66.

ment and persuaded the Colonial Office to force a repeal of Woodford's discriminatory legislation.[166] Full legal equality would wait until 1829.

9. Amelioration Order of 1824

The Amelioration Order of 1824 introduced by the abolitionist, Mr. Buxton forbade the corporal punishment of women.[167] In 1807 the objections to abolition of the slave trade was reckoned to be unfair to Africans who would then be kept from the enlightening influence of European civilization in the New World. The amelioration order was slanted towards creation of an Afro-Trinidadian peasantry:

> It was illegal to carry the whip in the field...; corporal punishment of females..absolutely forbidden; male slaves could only be flogged 24 hours after the offence, the presence of a free person..., limited by 25 blows. All punishments were to be recorded...(and) presented quarterly to commandants. Sunday markets and Sunday labour for the owner were prohibited. Marriages

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[166] St. Luce philip (Jean-Baptiste's brother) was a planter in the Naparimas and became the first unofficial member of the Legislative Council. Their sister Marie married Louis Romain, first Mayor of SanFernando. When Marie Romain died in 1894, she was said to belong to 'one of the oldest and most aristocratic coloured families in the island...she was polite to her inferiors, but never familiar... Even in her old age her aristocratic training clung to her in the highest degree.' When her husband was alive, 'it was then considered a privilege to those who had the entree as guests of the Romains.'(Quoted in Bridget Brereton Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 to 1900 1979 p..86-87) Bridget Brereton also writes of another coloured woman, Emilie Maresse-Paul, a 'talented blue stocking' who wrote on matters of education and the interference of the Catholic clergy in public education. (Bridget Brereton *Ibid* 1979 p.88)

[167] Mr. Buxton was the Abolitionist who had introduced the Amelioration laws.

> were to be encouraged...; no families were to be split up through sales. Slaves could possess and bequeath property. Manumission was to be facilitated...without the owner's consent. Savings banks were set up to safeguard the slave's property and encourage thrift. Finally, slave evidence could be admitted in court.[168]

The objections to the Amelioration Order of 1824, however, stressed the error of treating slave women with the same rod as European women. To withdraw the whip would ruin decent white families who were already sufficiently hard pressed. Negro women were notoriously insolent; the regulation would only encourage them to provoke their owners. One story was told of a very old and 'devout' French couple who obscenely provoked at table one day, had reacted with the whip. Their 'impudent' slave took the matter to court and the 'devout couple found themselves ruined by a fine.

It must be remembered that the objections came from people who accepted the values of the new society, who ceased to measure themselves by the standards of the metropolis and now were reduced to colonials who measured their eminence only by the perceived distance, economic and racial, from their Negroes. The local plantocrats felt that criminality should more be countenanced in the audacity of ill mannered slaves than in the time honoured reflex of the lash.[169]

William Burnley criticized the amelioration order because "if enforced, (it) would bring ruin and misery upon the proprietors, and prove totally destructive of the principal object..the improvement of the condition of the slaves."[170] At a protest meeting, Burnley had characterized the ordinance as "an unholy attempt to erase what Divine Providence had written in such legible characters on the face of the globe, that sin carries with it its own punishment in this world as the next".

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[168] Bridget Brereton A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962 1981 p.59.

[169] See V.S. Naipaul *Ibid* 1969 pp.316-17.

The whip is so oft repeated in historical records that it became cliched in Caribbean folk imagery.[171] The case of the *burnt callaloo* is part of the heritage of tales that have taken on the qualities of legends or myth for it encapsulates a peculiar cultural phenomenon.

> An old French woman who owned and worked an Estate on the East coast had occasion to find fault with her female cook (a slave) who in spite of repeated warnings; allowed the Callaloo for the Sunday breakfast to burn in the cooking - an unpardonable offence in the eyes of the amateurs of that most excellent dish. Furious at this Mme. C. ordered the unfortunate woman to be stretched out 'a quatre piquettes' i.e. to lay flat on the ground tied to four posts and to receive a whipping. the witnesses stated that whilst the punishment was being inflicted 'Madam walked up and down smoking a cigar' and that at every lash the poor cook called out 'Aie, Aie, Mme. ce ke brule dos moue (Aie, Aie, Mme. that burns my back.) Madam calmly replied 'Eh bien! Ma Fille! pour chi ou brule Calalou moue!' ('Well my good girl! why did you burn my Calalou?')
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> This case was brought to the notice of Sir Ralph Woodford and as Mme. C. had already been found to be very harsh with her slaves she was fined $200 - the amount being equally divided between the Catholic and Anglican Churches.[172]

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[170] Quoted in L.M. Fraser *Ibid* 1892 p.172

[171] Merle Hodge article in Orde Coombs (ed) Massa Day Dead. 1974

[172] Quoted from Records of the court of Royal Audience. by L.M. Fraser *Ibid* 1896 pp.173-174

Until the 1824 Amelioration Order there was no gender discrimination under the whip. Petticoat rebellions were characterized by the caustic tongues and quarrelsome disposition of slave women. Sir Ralph Woodford claimed that women were 'most prone to give offence'.[173] The images of slave women illustrates some of the powers of the weak. Insolent, hot tempered vixens and viragoes, contemptuous of their *superiors* who used their tongues to reply to the lash. In many cases, sexual liaisons with white men had blown any bluff of moral superiority in that quarter and competition between white women and their house servants for the dalliances of the slaveholders had fueled a round of contempt and jealousy that sharpened the animosity between rivals.[174]

Provocative action on the part of women was judged by a society where control and brutality were linked with silencing and

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173. Sir Ralph Woodford's letter to Lord Bathurst 7 May 1824: The 42nd clause of the Order had caused the greatest alarm as it confiscated to the Crown all the slaves of any person twice convicted of inflicting upon any slave any cruel or unlawful punishment, and upon this clause he remarked .: "When Your Lordship considers that persons are now for the first time forbidden to strike any female slave; that this class is allowed by all to be the most prone to give offence,, and that it will become even more difficult than at present to restrain them, from the knowledge that their master cannot punish them as he was accustomed to do, Your Lordship will, I think, be disposed to make some allowance for the infirmities of human nature, and at least save the family of the offender from that ruin which might fall upon them in consequence of an intemperate action of his own." Quoted in L.M. Fraser *Ibid* 1896 p.177

174. The hypocrisy of royal blood and fine breeding was mocked in the Dame Lorraine and le Maitre d' Ecole characterizations where the 'teacher' is ostensibly teaching slave women civilized European dances but using the lesson in cultural refinement as an excuse to satisfy a more perverse need. The ribaldry played out by exslave males in this art of acting profane under the guise of propriety is very popularto this day

submission. Powerful images constructed of slave women make it difficult to recognize the important over-riding institution of slavery. Language is certainly shown as critical arsenal on the tongues of the weak but the planter had power and the planter ruled; Viragoes and vixens might be expected to have a better mortality record than what was in fact the case.[175]

The Amelioration Order was aimed at regulating slave discipline without altering the status of slave as chattel, but this was a contradiction. Slave identity was essentially linked with perverting any individual identity and replacing this with absolute loyalty to the owner.[176] Indignation was roundly expressed at preposterous proposals which would ultimately destroy the *paternal feelings* and *respect* accorded to the *patriarchal institution* of slave ownership. There was much said about the *natural* affections for slaves and how amelioration would destroy bonds between master and slave.[177] In summary, the slave as *child* was one thing, but the slave as *adolescent* was dangerous; the slave as *adult* was no slave at all.

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[175] There does seem to be a repetitious emphasis on the intelligence and strength of slave women in comparison to slave men. It is as though slave men were a powerful threat just in their physical strength and the fact that they were emasculated. Men had to tolerate distinction while women were often mothers to mulatto children while working in the white woman's kitchen. This made for a very complex dynamic between the house slaves and the white women. These women were rivals, especially in those cases where the children of master/slave unions were libertated by the father and educated in Europe along with the legitimate children. But slave males had to seek manumission by being manipulative with women who were hard working, working on their garden plots or being trust worthy...or running away. Both African and European traditions were patriarchal, so the political challenges were ever there

[176] Orlando Patterson argued (1982) that an emphasis on chattel or property is an incorrect analysis (as any husband in divorce courts would be acutely aware.) The slave is denied a social existence and is socially dead.

[177] See Fraser, Carmichael and de Verteuil

The British government was experimenting with *human rights* in an economy based on slavery. Popular government, it was argued could never survive if it passed such unpopular laws (that is, if the voters came from the same class as the protesting group of propertied, wealthy male and sufficiently mature pragmatic types as opposed to the fanciful). William Burnley was ideally suited to spearhead the opposition to Amelioration and was an able representative for the Planter class. He had 'graduated' in Hislop's period (1804-1811):

> It was...noted, after the laughter at the discomfiture of the plunderers of widows and orphans, that fortunes were beginning to disappear. All property in dispute and all dead men's estates and moneys had been passing into the hands of an official called the depositario. .The depositario was a 'young Virginian gentleman', William Burnley; he was laying the foundations of the biggest and most enduring Trinidad fortune. ...Smith said that moneys taken in by the depositario went to a receiver in London and were invested in government securities; estates in Trinidad were managed by the depositario. 'Managed': it was a word that frightened local men of property, some of whom had started as managers.[178]

The *natural affections* of Burnley were indeed clear; slaves were as safe with Commandants and Protectors as widows and orphans were secure in the hands of the depositario.

10. Prohibition of Importation of Praedial Slaves

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178. V.S. Naipaul 1969 p.287.

After 1825 an act prohibited the removal of slaves from one colony to another. Planters immigrating to Trinidad would only be accompanied by personal slaves. And in this case, it seems that the *natural* response of slave owners was to sabotage the trend towards emancipation by interpreting the laws liberally and perverting the course of justice by fulfilling the letter of the law while subverting the spirit of the law.

The use of the courts for establishing human dignity and legal rights had to wait until slaves had access to them in fact, as well as in principle. Between 1824 and 1829 only 2 slaves were 'competent' to appear in court; and as the competency of slaves was assessed by the clergy, it might be suspected that heaven was pervious to French planters' prayers while slaves remained on their knees.[179] During this same period only four slave marriages were registered so fears that encouragement of slave marriages would add the sin of perjury to that of adultery were not confirmed in practice.[180]

The system whereby slaves who could work and save enough money to manumit themselves was laudable in theory. Between 1821 and 1827 856 slaves were manumitted. However, one third of these were freed gratuitously by masters whose generosity was usually suspect. All too frequently, the slaves who were given their freedom were slaves who were no longer productive, such as the older slaves and the sickly who were a burden on the estate. At 409 manumissions did increase between 1824 and 1829 but the assessment of slave value was inflated to make the price of freedom prohibitive.

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[179] The clergy who assessed a slave as competent to appear in court was a clergy about to be assessed for his competency as a representative of the Catholic Church. Fr. Anthony de Verteuil pointed out that the slaves did not get their way with one particular clergyman in the South who would have none of their schemes and ordered them back to work.

[180] Take a look in Coleridge where they visit Santa Grande mission and perform marriages. These can't have been registered or else there must be some mistake in Brereton 1981 p.58.

> In 1826 Pamela Munro, a domestic, was appraised at 261 pounds, a sum three times that paid for the same slave shortly before.
> In 1829 three slaves, of widely different values, were appraised by one umpire at exactly the same price, 216 pounds, 13 shillings and 14 pence...one of the slaves belonged to the Chief Justice who had appointed the umpire.[181]

The Amelioration Order succeeded in abolishing corporal punishment for female slave women but by some accident this did not exclude girls under 10 years of age.[182] Local planters understood the essential nature of subordination and submission and thus violations of female dignity were employed to coerce individual will or frustrate any sense of selfhood. If legal floggings were prohibited then there would be other techniques that could serve the same end; solitary confinement, mortising arms and legs in stocks, consignment to the treadmill, and the assigning of hard labour. There were also the verbal assaults on slaves and the threat of being sold or moved to another estate away from unsanctioned family units.[183] And there was the use of sexual coercion to stamp the seal of *overlordship*. However, pleading rape was even more difficult to prove then than now. It was also common to lump the female slave stereotype with yet another vice; the virago was also temptress and seductress, given to wanton excesses of the flesh. How could a creature brimming with lust point a finger and cry rape. She would be: insane, manipulative, perjuring herself or, a combination of all of these.[184]

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[181] Bridget Brereton *Ibid* 1981 p.60.

[182] Eric Williams1944 pp.197-98 mentioned without any elaboration that girls born after 1823 were given their freedom.
Mrs. Carmichael 1833 made special mention of the drastic punishments inflicted on female children by slave mothers. This may have been a way to ensure submission from daughters who were assigned a privileged status so that daughters would be 'harnessed' to secure freedom for mothers, and kin?

The West Indian planter's philistinism was plain to see when it came to discussing 'the saints' of England. Under the cloak of Christianity a rapier was being thrust into the lifeblood of the plantation economy. Humanitarians bent on ending slavery would have them believe that this would be a great day in the history of *humanity*. The idea of participating in an experiment in human

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183. Lewis Grant on 20 September 1832 sent a long despatch to Goderich about slave grievances. Most noteworthy were the complaints that the planters were loth to give a slave a pass to go to the protector, secondly slaves were prevented from going to their wife's home or she to his when they were on different estates - this being done either as a punishment or more often held in terrorem over the slave. Anthony de Verteuil The Years Before 1981 p.244.

184. Introduce the example of the 1826 case where a slave complained of a rape but no certification of competence to appear in court was forthcoming from the priest and so the accused was discharged. see Brereton 1981 p.61.
Also it is important to point out the role of sexual relations in securing favour and promotion in the system. The other side of sexual harrassment is the use of sex to manipulate economic and political advancement. Although we note that what was often the case, slave mothers of mulatto children remained as slaves while the children were freed.

rights was not a great favourite among planters. However, it is true that planters are given all measure of blame for all that slavery has come to mean while the English sipped sweetened tea or coffee and partook of delicacies that would have been dreadfully bland without the component shipped from the West Indies.

> He (the Englishman) thinks the bondage of the West Indies a monstrous exception to the general freedom of mankind; He knows not that such has existed in every country of the earth, and does still exist in most of them. Of the slaves of Egypt, of Greece and of Rome he has read and forgotten; of the villains of his own land perhaps he has not read; of the serfs of Russia, of Poland, of Bohemia and of Hungary he has never heard; of the slaves of Africa, and of the slaves of Asia he knows nothing; and the kidnapings and floggings of those who won Trafalgar and Waterloo are happily for England clothed in such a robe of glory that Englishmen cannot see through the majesty of its folds.[185]

Henry Nelson Coleridge, a fellow from King's College, Cambridge, travelled in the Caribbean for six months (1824). He was appalled by the institution of slavery, but he saw a need for gradual enfranchisement as opposed to an abrupt termination of a system so powerful. He wanted to see slaves achieve equality with citizens in the rest of the empire. Yet he recognized that the system of slavery must be powerfully seductive if it could take gentlemen from Oxford and Cambridge to the point where they could tolerate starving men in their fields and stooping to whip women who had to sweat to do them service. Coleridge was taken aback by reaction to the amelioration ordinance. His experiences allowed him to write:

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185. Henry Nelson Coleridge Six Months in the West Indies in 1825 p.312

> I suspect that if it were generally known that the slaves ate, drank and slept well, and were beyond all comparison a gayer, smarter and more familiar race than the poor of this kingdom, the circumstances of their labour being compulsory, and in some measure of their receiving no wages for it, would not very painfully affect the sympathies of the ladies and gentlemen of the African Institution and the Anti-Slavery Society.[186]

While it was true that slaves in the Caribbean were all these things that Coleridge had outlined, *the crux of the matter was a price on freedom*. The labouring classes of Europe were materially disadvantaged in this period, but the scourge of the whip did not mark them or fundamentally shape their very being.[187]

The dispute as he saw it, was the means for promoting industry, competence and temperance to prepare slaves for the *responsibilities of freedom*. His essay on the means for achieving this is carefully constructed. The first priority would have to be *education* with particular emphasis on religious values and the *incorporation of the Protestant work ethic*. The second priority would be *legal reform* so that laws could articulate equality in graduated stages. The third priority would be to make *manumission*

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[186] Henry Nelson Coleridge Six Months in the West Indies 1825 p.313.

[187] Floggings were reserved for offences under the criminal code, along with such things as transportation to Australia. It has also been noted that military personnel were more harshly treated than slaves or convicts under the whip. This was a source of deep resentment and added chagrin and humiliation to the burden of regimental duties among colonial labourers.

The investigation into Negro Character in Anthony de Verteuil's The Years Before illustrates the almost most tranquil, laxidasical life of the slave. Mrs. Carmichael says little that would cause great offence to even modern sensibilities. Later on we see the ideas of Trolloppe, Froude, Carlyle and the rebuff from Thomas for a better picture of slaves as opposed to slavery.

prices reasonable so that slaves with the qualities of good citizens could achieve their freedom.[188]

A brief sketch of the population of *34,187 people* in 1826 showed that slaves represented *69%*, whites *6%* and free coloureds *25%*. This demography is very different from other slaves colonies where the slave population represents some 80-90% of the population total.[189] Of the slave population, *66%* were creoles and *34%* were Africans (and this is two decades after the end of the slave trade from Africa). The free coloured population represented *81%* of the so-called free population. The white population from Britain and its Empire numbered only *9%* of the free population and this was three decades after the island's capitulation to Britain.

Immigrants

The population figures for 1826 reflect the new arrivals: 1. American freed slaves who served on the British side in Virginia (1812-1813), 2. disbanded African soldiers of the West India Regiment, 3. liberated slaves from Africa, and 4. peons from the

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[188] Mrs Carmichael (1833) indicated that slaves were gaining their freedom on credit and then defaulting on payment. She thought this was not a quality that should be encouraged as it was ruining planters ane making another folly of their good nature. Honest slaves would pay for their freedom in full or continue to be slaves until they could purchase their manumission price.

[189] Higman, Brereton, Patterson and Millette have included notes to the effect that Trinidad could not be compared with places like Cuba or Jamaica as the demography showed that there were too few slaves and too many black and coloured slave owners, and black and coloured free persons.

Spanish main. The liberated slaves and ex-slaves from the U.S. after the War of 1812 were allotted 16 acres of land near the eight company villages not far from Princes Town. The 'Americans' or 'Yankees' were baptists and worshipped with an exuberance, that distressed orthodox clergy. These free black people were proud and kept themselves separate until the sugar belt spread south. And one might suspect that ex-slaves might have represented a threat to the value system that kept the local social hierarchy in balance. Governor Woodford was sensitive in the extreme on matters of colour and status.

African born soldiers of the West India Regiments were allocated land in south east Trinidad (near Manzanilla).[190] The Africans were supposed to care for the road between their seven company villages and Arima, but this was neglected as roads were for people on horses, government officials, Clergy and Slave-owners, whereas the villagers always walked and could find their way without roads. Mandingo ex-sergeants cultivated an Islamic code and the language spoken in this area was unique because of the retention of African forms.

11. Ordinance of May 30, 1830

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[190] See the locations of villages for militia groups from America and Africa in Michael Anthony Trinidad Profile p.92.

By giving slaves a toe in the door (as it were) to legal rights, a struggle had been set in motion that Fr. Anthony de Verteuil would parallel with modern trade unionism where demands for better conditions are never satisfied. For de Verteuil, the planters were protecting themselves against new laws, while slaves demonstrated a remarkable facility for obtaining news of public documents relevant to their treatment or conditions prior to official release of the information.[191]

An Ordinance of May 30, 1830 (read like a catalogue of resistance) after slaves struck work at Plein Palais addressed the issue of punishment for some of the problems that planters were confronting as emancipation inevitably approached:

1. willful neglect of health,
2. gambling in any manner,
3. holding meetings or dances without permission of owner,
4. crowding on public places,
5. neglect of work or duty whether from a.obstinancy, b.determination, c. idleness or d.feigning sickness,
6. running away,
7. gross insubordination,
8. endangering property by fire.[192]

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[191] See de Verteuil *ibid* p.101 "The slaves have an unaccountable facility in obtaining partial and generally distorted information whenever a public document is about to be received which can in any way affect their condition or station." (Gov Smith)
Information was often discussed in front of house slaves as the slaves were simply unacknowledged. Or it was felt that house slaves could be trusted as they were forever in the presence of the owning class. Many plantocrats were deluded in thinking that their slaves were like family members belonging more to the class that enslaved them than to the slave community where they lived with their families.

[192] See Anthony de Verteuil. *Ibid* 1981 p.223

These measures indicate a tide of resistance from the slaves. The 'riot' of Plein Palais made it transparent to Government officials that a clear statement of slave status and punishments for offences was necessary as slaves were marking time in the wake of freedom being granted. At Plein Palais 81 slaves refused to work and threatened the magistrate with their cutlasses. When the regiment arrived, 60 slaves fled into the forest. Sir Lewis Grant examined the *women who had not fled* as it was often the house slaves who were willing to become informers as they were more likely to be loyal to the family as they cared for the children of the house. In this case, 17 runaway slaves arrived in Port of Spain to complain directly to Grant about their working conditions.

After a hearing before the Magistrate the driver received 39 strokes, 2 other men received 30 strokes and 3 women were sent to the treadmills while the owner pardoned several of the offenders. Indeed the owner was convinced that this whole episode was brought on by Sir Lewis's attitude of 'molly coddling' the slaves.[193]

12. The Code Noir November 2, 1831

The Code Noir of November 2, 1831, was dubbed 'the 121 pronged scourge invented by the saints' in *The Port of Spain Gazette*, March 25, 1832. This new amelioration order had 121 clauses and it was felt to be a death blow to slavery and the ruination of marginal estates. The Code Noir 1831 was designed to eliminate any ambiguity that might have arisen in the Amelioration Ordinance of 1824.

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[193] Anthony de Verteuil. *Ibid* 1981 p.223.

The Amelioration Ordinances were resisted by planters. According to Eric Williams (1944) the measures taken towards emancipation were received as a 'catalogue of indulgences to Blacks'.[194] Sir Lewis Grant was described by the *Gazette* as a fool at the behest of the slaves:

> 'the negroes were such pets of His Excellency Sir Lewis Grant and when like an over-indulgent papa to his spoiled children our good natured Governor had not the heart to refuse the pretty dears any boon they might take into their curly heads to ask of him.'[195]

Some documentations of the years preceding emancipation recount sentiments of the pro-slavery planter class. Fr. Anthony de Verteuil's **The Years Before** (1981) and Mrs. Carmichael's **Domestic Manners** (1833) leave one with the impression that slavery protected African's from *themselves* while Amelioration Ordinances were described as *undermining the paternal relationship that had grown between owners and slaves*. A touching thought. At the end of Mrs. Carmichael's residence in Trinidad she would write:

> We had now determined upon returning to Europe,

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[194] Here we have echoes of Max Weber on the nature of power. So much is said about language as a craft for power mongering among the weak, but when it comes down to it, power is not a matter of an art of articulation or a cleverness in idioms, it is the ability to make the rules, an ability to make your meanings stick.

[195] Anthony de Verteuil. *Ibid* 1981 p.244

> there seemed no longer any rational prospect of doing good, the toil became insupportable, where the best intended efforts all failed, either for the improvement of the people, or the benefit of the estate. We felt that the really important influence of the proprietor was gone. There are some good and faithful negroes... but in the event of any rising, their numbers could have been of no avail. ...The certainty that we were no longer safe, and no longer able to effect any good determined us to leave the estate.[196]

Fr. Anthony de Verteuil (1981) writing about the years before emancipation, under the government of Sir Lewis Grant (1829-1833), suggested that 'the solid fabric of society seemed to be disintegrating', and the Trinidad that men then knew was disappearing before their very eyes and for the slaves the change in attitudes must have brought *'untold psychological stress on the old faithful slaves and on masters alike'*[197].

> The complete control of master over slave had largely broken down...The old patriarchal attitude on the estates was fast being replaced by a strictly money economy, the foundation of large holdings and the destruction of the small estate owner .. With emancipation in the offing, the natural tendency was for slaves and owners to be set in violent opposition, and the 'foreign' element, the 'English party' and the free coloured to seek separate survival...Times were hard, and many men were exceptionally selfish and cruel, but there was always a solid core of settlers willing to do their best *for themselves*, for one another, and for their country.[198]

The Code Noir was clear to owners and slaves alike;

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[196] Mrs. Carmichael Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies 1833 pp.334-335.

[197] *Ibid* p.225

[198] From the Introduction, de Verteuil 1981.

'benevolence' was being replaced by legally enforced standards for slave management. The so-called paternal relationship between owner and slave was clearly defined so as to include specific regulations regarding slave food, housing, medical attention, hours of labour, access to the Protector and slave housing. Slaves would have access to the courts and inquests into sudden deaths were compulsory.[199] Protectors could not own slaves or be compromised by self interest.

The Code Noir 1831 was followed by numerous tales of outrage and hysteria in the Planter's oracle the *Port of Spain Gazette*. Groups of slaves were leaving their work without permission, to complain to the Protectors or to go to the Governor himself. However, where the protector's political stance was conservative, things went on much as before. "On some estates, and especially near San Fernando, due to the indefatigable exertions of the Rev Abbe Smith...everything went on much as in the old way...the planters were considerate towards their slaves, and the slaves themselves were beginning to be convinced that they must work, and they were not free."[200]

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[199] The case of Faltini gives us a glimpse of the derelict estate owner and his frivolous daughters, conscious of fashion, immature, given to giggling, loud music and board games while lacking education entirely. We also see that slaves are using the Code Noir to secure their freedom before the law: He (Faltini) had never been harsh to his negroes, but they became embittered against him because he could not feed and clothe them properly (according to the provisions of the 'Code Noir'). Eventually, they brought false accusations against him, declaring that a female slave had died owing to his neglect. She had suffered from a mal d'estomac and had eaten earth. The merchant to whom he was indebted, fearing the high cost of litigation, foreclosed the mortgage and took over the estate. ...Because should a proprietor not have the means to support his slaves he was obliged to set them free. (De Verteuil, 1981, p.175)

The Committee of Inhabitants Jan 1832 tried to include free coloured planters of fine repute on the Committee of Slave Owners petitioning against the Code Noir. The free coloured inhabitants declined this untimely expression of invitation to join a group that had hitherto, only been known for its hostility and negative discrimination. The free coloured inhabitants presented an address of 'Loyalty to the King' expressing gratitude for the 'privileges'[201] they had received, which indicated that the Code Noir 1831 had the support of the largest sector of planters.

Guerrillas or rebels were male and female alike. Lucille Mathurin's **The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery** (1975), pointed out that slave women were no strangers to strategies of resistance in the years before emancipation. Slaves resisted by doing a minimum amount of work and using strategy available to them within the law and a not a few other measures beyond the law. By a recipe of poison, incendiarism, 'suffering' punishment, malingering, insubordination and appeals to the courts especially the strategic use of legislation in the Code Noir, slaves were procuring their freedom. By 1831 the very institution of slavery was being undermined by slave resistance:

Poison - Nolly Beaubrun (a free coloured planter) owned

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200. Anthony de Verteuil **The Years Before** 1981 pp.179-180.

201. Civil Rights to Free Coloureds 1829

> a sugar estate + 80 slaves near Tacarigua - He had been nominated a post on the Committee of Inhabitants Jan 1832 but refused the appointment - observed the provisions of the Code Noir. Slaves believed the law entitled them to 3 days a week - a common misunderstanding...Disgruntled slaves did very little work and 16-17 went to the Protector to complain about long hours... (Assistant Protector Grant dismissed the complaint as frivolous...and the slaves responded by poisoning 9 oxen and 2 mules)
> Nolly Beaubrun:'You whom I have reared in my own house and whose wants I have carefully attended to - you have brought my name before the Protector..to make...a most unjust, vexatious and unfounded complaint; and you have subsequently destroyed by poison...my property - you, the very persons whom I have treated as if you were "mes propres enfants".
> (Within a short while 3 more mules were poisoned..)[202]

Incendiarism was particularly popular in the dry season at a time when market prices were depressed and many planters, facing ruin, were not able to support the standards outlined in the Code. Those planters who did not opt to release the slaves as provided for in the code were often the victims of guerrilla action. De Verteuil (1981) recounted a tale of one arsonist who was captured after the blaze. He was disturbed by the information that this woman had committed herself to this action even though it was said that she was 'well treated' by her master.[203]

Malingering - Slaves used ill health as a means to avoid labouring for their owners. Mrs. Carmichael (1833) has given this description to posterity:

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[202] A. de Verteuil *Ibid* 1981, p.224.

[203] Women were well placed for guerrilla activity as they were often trusted in the house and they were immune from corporal punishment.

> Nothing can be more ludicrous than to see some 10 to 12 negroes crawling up to Massa's house on Monday morning, walking about the rate of a quarter of a mile an hour - head tied up - whinging tone.
> (There was) one negro woman who was not looking sick, but her tongue being very brown, she was given a rest. Her tongue then, day after day, changed from brown to green, to white until all the shades had been exhausted; when at this stage she thrust out to the horrified doctor a bright blue tongue, he realized what was up, and made her wash off the dye and go to work.[204]

'Suffering' Punishment - Mrs. Carmichael (1833) also suggested that slaves were committing the ultimate mischief of using the punishment of being placed in stocks as a way to avoid labour and mock the only recourse available to the planter now stripped of his whip:

> The negro looks on the stocks as no punishment. He goes to them, lies within his mosquito curtains, with his pillow at his head - has his food brought to him and prefers this to any work however light.[205]

Whether the slaves were using the stocks in the manner the Mrs. Carmichael suggests is questionable, but what is certain, that owners were thwarted in their efforts to maintain authority. If the slaves preferred the stocks to any duty, it might well have been that this *'punishment'* frustrated the owner and this was *'advantage'* in an atmosphere where civil rights for slaves was viewed as ruin, persecution and all manner of pestilence for their owners. What is crucial to recognize here is the symbolic aspect of slave activities. Here, the slaves are turning *punishments* designed by planters, into *resistance* designed by themselves. This meant that punishments became public acts that shamed or irritated the master class.

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[204] Mrs. Carmichael 1833 pp.218-219.

[205] quoted in de Verteuil 1981 p.230.

Courts - Women were seen as harassing the courts with their grievances in spite of the fact that these planter regulators were hardly sympathetic and the majority of the women were punished for lodging *frivolous* complaints. Opportunities to take up time and complain in public must have caused some consternation as: a. the planter was absent from his function as overseer, b. the complaint would be known and circulated, c. public statements would be a source of embarrassment, or potential embarrassment, and d. there was the nuisance to authorities for having to record any complaint.

The Code Noir 1831 only exasperated slaves because it was systematically ignored or subverted by strategically placed persons. 1 May, 1832, the first case called was that of King vs. Vesprey before the Alcalde Mr. Frederick Brown. Mrs. Vesprey's slave had refused to fetch water to make tisane (camomile or herbal tea). On repeating the order the slave had retorted with the most obscene gesture "exposing a certain part of her person" then took up a "certain unmentionable domestic utensil and thrust it into her mistress's face, throwing some of the contents on her and making use of the most insulting language." The mistress reached for a rose bush and whipped her slave, which was forbidden under the Code Noir. Mr. Brown refused to take his seat at the bench and said, "I have attentively read the Sumaria (depositions) in this prosecution - perhaps the word persecution, would be more applicable." Mr. Brown was thus able to defy the law with a zeal and alacrity of the planters. "I shall never be made a tool to injure the inhabitants of this conquered Colony, and shall therefore quit this Bench without a vote on the present occasion, as I shall do on every future similar case that may appear before me." The court was forced to adjourn and prosecutions against slave owners were suspended until Governor Lewis Grant made such action a criminal offense subject to fines and imprisonment.[206]

The Case of the Free Barbados Slaves: Illegal Imports

During the 1820's the planters were constantly fighting the abolitionists or 'the saints' in England. The abolitionist won the battle for making slave importation from other West indian islands illegal in 1825. Governor Sir Lewis Grant had the unpopular task of policing this law but his case against known transgressors was sabotaged when court files 'disappeared'. It was rumoured that they had been stolen and dumped into the privy on the premises of Messrs Porter and Wilson. The chief of Police refused to issue a warrant for the search and the Attorney General had to be called in. A free Barbados slave was guarding the files and living on the premises out of the 'charity' of officials...'No papers were found but only huge quantities of temper lime, which would serve to destroy the documents'.[207] *The Port of Spain*

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[206] Anthony de Verteuil *Ibid* 1981 pp.211-216.

Gazette sparkles with wit and glee at genius for intrigue among their readership. The other side of this folly with laws that dared to interfere with the rights of planters to 'labour' was the neglect and starvation of Barbados slaves to mock a governor who was now, 'legally speaking', responsible for their welfare, had anyone informed His Excellency of their existence.[208]

On 20 January 1833 masked revelers in a pre-carnival 'jump-up' were arrested by Assistant to the Chief of Police, Mr. Peake. The indignant crowd reacted by breaking windows and attacking Mr. Peake. The slaves were growing restless with the prospect of freedom and the reality of slavery. A female runaway Barbadian slave being taken into custody was liberated by a group of six Barbadian slaves. Her status as slave was actually suspect but it was easier to pass females off as personal slaves at the time. In this atmosphere of ferment Mr McQueen of the West India Association collected propaganda to fight the anti-slavery party in England. A delegation of Free Mandingoes presented McQueen with a Memorial to the King, requesting repatriation for themselves and their community in return for their slaves and their property.

By 1833 it was obvious that all this tinkering with slave regulations and every effort to sabotage amelioration laws being powerfully placed, meant the Imperial Government had to legislate an end to slavery. Emancipation became law on August 1, 1834 -

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207. Anthony de Verteuil *Ibid* 1981

208. Give a short description of Brereton's version of this incident as it is not in the same 'good' humour as the Planter's oracle *The Port of Spain Gazette*. e.g. Starving slaves in Royal Gaol who have been returned to the government without this information being passed on. In effect

apprenticeship was begun.

13. Emancipation August 31 1834

Emancipation was not designed by the local planter class, nor, one suspects, was it as bold to see in the local social landscape as it might have appeared in official documents and our records of history.[209] However, the cynic might suspect that this decision to liberate a people from bondage had a less noble aim than pure humanitarian concern. In the cold light of Economics, Eric Williams Capitalism and Slavery (1944) would look at slavery's role in financing the Industrial Revolution in England and how slavery became outmoded and unprofitable to an English economy.

> The abolition of the slave trade, then the abolition of slavery, were not merely the results of a rising standard of political ethics in Britain (although Williams does not dismiss as unimportant the work of men like Clarkson), but were a form of cutting losses.[210]
> D. W. Brogan

Friends of abolition in England and America were as brave as they were unpopular at the time, but the glory bestowed on them may have hidden a harsher and less 'civilized' version of the events that came before and after 1834. The history of emancipa-

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starving the other witnesses against the transgressors.

[209] See Elsa Goveia A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century 1956 and Eric Williams Capitalism and Slavery 1944

tion often told is the one of Christian abolitionists crusading against the evils of daemonic slavery; how else could it have been told? The emotionalism of 'the saints' and the hypocrisy of the clergy abhorred Williams :'For if, as so many have held, slavery falls into the realm of theology, monopoly most emphatically does not'.

> In 1833...the alternatives were clear: emancipation from above, or emancipation from below. But EMANCIPATION. Economic change, the decline of the monopolists, the development of capitalism, the humanitarian agitation in British churches, contending perorations in the halls of parliament, had now reached their completion in the determination of the slaves themselves to be free. The Negroes had been stimulated to freedom by the development of the very wealth which their labour had created.[211]

The passive resistance of slaves, their skills in avoiding work for their owners; the destruction of property by fire, neglect and mishandling; the poisoning of animals; and the dread of poisonings higher up the animal chain; the evidence of powerful superstitions, along with the practice of obeah; feigning illnesses, or eating dirt (mal d'estomac) and other ways of suicide; procuring miscarriages; singing insurrection and hinting at an end to slavery by fair means or foul is often a silent chapter in emancipation history.

Freedom was to come gradually to slaves, a reprieve to planters was that a period of apprenticeship would interphase this transition from slavery to freedom. Apprenticeship would continue

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210. in Eric Williams Capitalism and Slavery 1944 p.vii.

until 1838 (and end 2 years earlier than the date set, and again the victory would be given to abolitionists whose moral crusade did much to change public opinion in England).

14. Apprenticeship to 1838

In Trinidad events overtook the Governor's proclamation which stated that: "Her Majesty the Queen and her Parliament have determined to continue the Law that the Praedial Apprenticeship be observed until 1840."[212] The efforts of the governor to ensure that the period of apprenticeship would remain was met with hostility and defiance by slaves on the estates. Sir George Hill sought the advice of Council on the laws passed by the British Parliament. The situation in the country was frought with hysteria about the ruination of the plantation economy but the island was powerless to turn the tide on British Parliamentary decisions. Thus, by one vote and with one week in hand, Trinidad abolished apprenticeship on 1 August 1838:

> ...Be it therefore enacted and it is hereby enacted and ordained by his Excellency, the Right Honourable Sir George Fitzgerald Hill...by and with the advice of the Council of Government thereof, and by the authority of the same, that all persons, who on the First day of August 1838 shall be in a states of apprenticeship as Praedial Apprenticed labourers...shall upon and from

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211. Eric Williams *Ibid* 1944 p.181.

> and after the First day of August 1838 become and be to all intents and purposes whatsoever, absolutely and forever manumitted and set free...[213]

Many planters faced hardship and ruin and the whole scene was aggravated by ambiguous social relations where once there were definite codes of conduct.[214] This brave decision for a common humanity was an indelible shift in human relations in general and race relations in particular in 1838. Governor Lord Harris (1845-1854) announced that with emancipation 'a race had been freed but a society was not yet born':[215]

> The thirty years following the end of apprenticeship
> brought unprecedented changes and stress to all people in Trinidad. ...(one) is struck by the virtual absence of civil disturbances and communal violence. ...only once did (a) matter go to the desperate expedient of a riot at which shots were fired. ...over a measure to shave the heads of debtors in the Royal Gaol as if they were common criminals.[216]

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[212] see Michael Anthony Profile Trinidad 1975 p.114.

[213] Quoted in Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 pp.114-115.

[214] See Anthony de Verteuil The Years Before 1981

[215] Donald Wood 1968 p.x.
Note: Lord Harris's contributions to Trinidad are ambiguous in that he was considered a planter's governor for effectively putting Indenture into an efficient mould to serve the needs of a flagging economy and aid the plantocracy while at the same time introducing mass education at the primary level through ward schools. He established an inland postal system and patronized the traditional Amerindian Santa Rosa fete in Arima which gave way to the annual race meeting. The legacies of a pragmatist who kept the wealth of the nation as a primary focus and came to be recognized for his youthful vigour, his introduction of a system of local government (1849), his passion for efficiency, his marriage (1850) to a local woman Sarah Cummings (daughter of the archbishop at Trinity) and dedication to his office. See Michael Anthony Profile Trinidad: A Historical survey from the Discovery to 1900 1975 pp.151-159 who would say "It is the opinion of many that Trinidad never saw another Governor like Lord Harris."

The story that needs to be told is the one of transition which emphasizes the bloodless revolution from slavery to freedom. The role of the church and religion proved a rich field of symbols to mine in marshalling factions for a masterpiece of social engineering. What slavery had failed to do under a system of terrorem, a market system aided by Christian indoctrination in humility and obedience proved a powerful political strategy to exploit the professed convictions of freed slaves and European elite alike. Emancipation 'freed' slaves into a functioning plantation economy without giving them access to education, citizenship or suffrage. This relative peace is virtually unprecedented in the history of revolutions and says much that addresses the construction 'savagery and moral inferiority' reputed among slaves. It must be said that Afro-Trinidadians used Christianity for their own ends with remarkable dexterity.[217]

To be a Christian was to be aligned with the forces that acted for abolition and it might be said that the promise of social upliftment was as powerful as the need for spiritual upliftment in the convictions and fervour of church affiliation and participation. The extraordinary popularity of the ex-communicated free coloured Abbe de Ridder among Roman Catholics caused a schism in the Church over the struggle for the rights of free coloured

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216. Donald Wood *Ibid* 1968 p.3.

217. See the uses made of Catholicism by the Free-coloured population under Fr. de Ridder in Trinidad in Anthony de Verteuil's The Years Before 1981 (Not that Fr.de Verteuil is as sympathetic to the freedom fighting as other authors) Also see Carl Campbell's articles on Abbe de

and the education of Afro-Trinidadian children. Thus, where Church and State were linked one strategy open to the uneducated freed person was to agitate from within Christian doctrine to make waves within the state; the prayers of the poor needed the intercession of funds and programs from the state.[218]

15. Transition: Neo-Slavery to Colonialism

Perhaps the most dramatic change in the demography of Trinidad was the urban migration to Port of Spain. In 1801 the population was 7,151, but in 1838 the population was 11,701.[219] Ex-slaves and Free-Blacks settled on Ariapita lands and worked on the wharves - forming the lower class settlements of Corbeau Town, East Dry River, Laventille and Belmont.[220] The area along the old St Joseph Road became increasingly overcrowded, while the original old town centered around Nelson and Duncan Streets formed the hub of the urban poor.

> In Port of Spain, the large increase in numbers in the 1840's chiefly of the lowest class of citizen led inevitably to vice of all sorts but especially promiscuity. The proportion of males to females in the towns at this period was 74 males to 100 females, and even though we may allow for the large proportion of washer-

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Ridder listed in the reference section.

[218] See Raymond Smith "Religion in the Formation of the West indian Society" in Martin Kilson and Robert Rotberg The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays 1976.

[219] Brereton A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962 1981... 58.5% coloured; 25% ex-slaves; 16% whites. p.70

> women, seamstresses, hucksters, cigar makers and petty traffickers, it cannot be denied that many of the female sex resorted to the towns for the purpose of either private or public prostitution; and no one could pass through the streets of the town without having ample evidence of the utter degradation of the lower class females.[221]
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> Even in 1874 when Victorian morals might have been thought to have penetrated Trinidad, Charles Kingsley could comment with disgust:'Port of Spain is a seaport town and one in which the license usual in such places on both sides of the Atlantic is aggravated by the superabundant animal vigour and perfect independence of the younger women. It is a painful subject'.[222]

The 'painful subject' would inflame many an impassioned entry in travellers' diaries, and deviance would invariably be confused with vice and pathology associated with the females in these activities; and the time has not yet come when the validity of comments like 'superabundant animal vigour' and 'perfect independence of the younger women' have been researched and understood in the social context rather than from the smoke screen of puritan ideology. It is time to listen to the voices of these *Jezebels* or *jagabats* and judge as they judge themselves or as we judge others after a sympathetic hearing.

Dr. Louis de Verteuil writing in the latter half of the nineteenth century, suggested that "Poverty is the parent of ignorance, as also of consequent immorality and crime; and,...the evil of concubinage has already found a substitute in...prostitution."[223] Louis de Verteuil remarked that crime,

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220. See Olga Mavrocordato. The Voices in the Street 1977

221. See Louis de Verteuil Trinidad pp.188-189

222. Fr. Anthony de Verteuil *Ibid* 1973, p.40.

especially juvenile offences had increased and some of the crimes that spelt slave resistance prior to emancipation were more prevalent 16 years after emancipation: "incendiarism, petty thefts, and particularly the horrible practice of procuring miscarriages, either to conceal a lapse from virtue, or to get rid of a helpless being which might become a future burden."[224] The signs of the times indicated that emancipation had freed the slaves with the expectation that freed slaves would compete for positions in the plantation economy rather than seek alternative sources of livelihood beyond labour.

Port of Spain was unhygenic and overcrowding was accompanied by diseases of both mind and body. In 1854 Trinidad would witness a plague of Asiatic Cholera which would strike one person in every 5 in Port of Spain. Dr. Louis de Verteuil would watch 3 of his children die. "They were buried from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception along with thirty-five others the same day."[225]

The *Port-of-Spain Gazette* for September 13 recorded that "There is...scarcely a street in this town that has not lost some of its inhabitants, and streets such as Duncan Street, Park Street, St Ann's Road and York Street seem the favourite haunts of the dis-

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223. Louis de Verteuil *Ibid* (1856) p.21.

224. Louis de Verteuil. *Ibid* p.21.
"I think it...due to the Negro to say, that those vicious features of his character which I have portrayed, are more the offspring of ignorance and the consequences of a protracted state of debasing bondage, than the effects of a wicked and perverse nature. ...they do not approach to that degree of moral turpitude which characterizes those of the same class in Europe." p.25

ease....In the houses near the La Basse there has been a large number of deaths - also in the vicinity of the savannah."[226] What was initially an Afro-Trinidadian disease soon proved no respector of pigment or class. The British Government dispatched an expert in Dr. Parkin who introduced the 'remedy' for cholera: a mixture of lime juice and bicarbonate of soda. There were any number of 'remedies', another was "ammoniated tincture of opium" which may have relieved the suffering without removing the fatal sting of the disease.[227]

Louis de Verteuil indicated that mortality among children under one year was high and between one year and five years diseases exact their bitter legacy after weaning. Malaria and dysentery were most common, and lepers were encouraged to enter an asylum at Cocorite. Lunatics were common in the streets and a separate ward in the Royal gaol until 1858 might have us assume that inmates preferred to walk the streets than to volunteer for 'treatment'. Yellow fever was also a horrible killer.

> By reference to Captain Tulloch's "Statistical Report," and Returns published for the six years ending December 1858, it would appear that the ratio of mortality has increased: for , before emancipation, and *among the slaves*, be it remarked, it was 1 per 33, whereas it is now 1 per 30.20, for the whole population....even under the *incubus* of slavery, the mortality was less than under the regimen of freedom. ...These causes are: the improvidence and neglect of the emancipated; the misery which has been on the increase, since the your 1846 especially; the consequent want of comforts - often, in fact, of the necessaries of life - and the utter deficiency of medical aid.[228]

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225. A. de Verteuil *Ibid* 1973 p.51.

226. Quoted in Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 p.162

Fr. de Verteuil recounting the early medical career of Sir Louis de Verteuil, explained that doctors had to compete with *quacks* practicing obeah. However, medical science must be placed within its context, de Verteuil mentioned that there were some 'maddening failures' in medical science at the time..'of 21 patients undergoing uterus extirpations in 1832, 21 died during or immediately after the operation'[229] and he added that these gruesome statistics came from operations performed in 'famous Paris Hospitals'. But such *challenges* did not deter men of science in criticizing such impostors of African descent as these *charlatans and quacks* practicing *obeah*.[230]

> Some obeahmen pretend to cure diseases; they invariably declare that such diseases are produced by wicked practices, and of course can be cured only by the administration of medicines aided by incantations; and such incantations are accordingly performed with the accompaniment of cabalistic words and signs. ...The least I can say of such people is this: they are impostors of the worst kind, having mainly one object in view - obtaining money under false pretenses. Some even will not recoil from administering poisons to satisfy their hatred or with the view of proving their power. I contend that, in general, the magistracy makes too light of Obeahism.[231]

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227. Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 p.163

228. Louis de Verteuil Trinidad p.189.

229. Anthony de Verteuil Sir Louis de Verteuil 1973 p.27

230. It must be noted that just about any practice that was thought to be African became another incident of *obeah* practice. In fact obeah might be the catch-all category for European ignorance of African knowledge and behaviors.

231. Dr. Louis de Verteuil in A. de Verteuil 1973 p.35. See Louis de Verteuil "Introduction" p.21.
"At present, the labouring population,in the mass, receive no direct

The vultures or corbeaux introduced by the Spanish to keep the streets of the city clean were unable to cope with the daunting task in this over-populated and still growing city. This poor level of sanitation claimed many colonial victims in those over-crowded urban areas and the rich and poor alike suffered the epidemics that scourged the city.

Dr. John Davy, the Inspector General of Army Hospitals, recorded his observations (1854) of Port of Spain together with figures showing that 80% of the unemployed population of Trinidad were inhabitants of Port of Spain. In 1844 the population was 59,875 and 15,609 of these resided in Port of Spain. Dr.Davy laments that the idle class was not to be found among the rich:

> There are no idlers among the better class, so that one seventh of the whole population of the colony, nearly a fourth of the adult and more than half of the total population of the chief town area composed chiefly of persons in the lower ranks of life, and having no visible means of gaining an existence.[232]
> ...in regard to the negroes of African descent and the people of color of mixed races, - having the firm conviction that the low and degraded state in which they

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medical attendance, because of their own unwillingness to remunerate a regular practitioner: in lieu of this, they prefer the assistance of a class of impostors, both male and female, who unite the practices of *obeah* and quackery, exact little or nothing from their patients, and generally satisfied both with the amount and mode of payment tendered for the nostrums they administer, or the obeah incantations they perform. Again, when sick, very many of the labouring class are, solely through previous improvidence, in need of everything in the shape of comfort - not infrequently even of the simple covering of a blanket. As to children, they are neglected to an extent which would not be credited elsewhere." p.190

[232] John Davy The West Indies Before and Since Slave Emancipation, Comprising the Windward and Leeward Islands' Military Command; Founded on notes and observations collected during a three years' residence. 1854 p.164.

> were sunk and from which they are but slowly emerging, has been owing not to any inherent inferiority of nature or of mental capacity, but to the dire circumstances of their former condition in the state of slavery.[233]

During the nineteenth century the availability of cheap, reliable labour for the agricultural sector, chiefly sugar, was the principle reason for the dramatic increase and multi-racial compositions of large numbers of immigrants. 1839-1840 saw the arrival of French and German immigrants to furnish the ranks as managers and overseers. But Dr. Davy was critical of the system that was used for training managers of estates. He cites the 1848 essay on the cultivation of Cane (one of three published by Lord Harris) by A.W. Anderson:

> But where do we find anything like this system amongst ourselves? A youth is taken from a store and placed on a sugar estate to superintend its management. A youngster arrives from England and is placed on an estate as an overseer, and as soon as he is found to possess intelligence and probity, he is invested with a management; or if he be of mature age, he is inducted at once into a management, without undergoing any previous probation. It takes years of apprenticeship to make a tailor or shoe maker, but in Trinidad a planter is made in a day.[234]

It mattered much that fair complexions were worn by managers even if incompetence was calculated in losses during the 'apprenticeship'. Difficult times saw alcoholism on the increase among classes once loath to admit this affliction among members of their ranks. But these were times when images of race and status were being blurred as success became the reward of competence and effort in a post-emancipation economy.

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[233] Dr. Davy *Ibid* 1854 p.ii.

[234] A.W. Anderson in Davy *Ibid* 1854 P.316.

16. New Arrivals

The fear that Ex-slaves would not return to the fields to do piece work for wages to profit the planters was only partially true. Many ex-slaves continued to do what they had always done to gain much needed cash which only plantations could provide. However, they preferred to move away from plantations and the obligations that went with such hospitality. Many settled in new villages on Crown land around Port of Spain and San Fernando living on provision gardens and only labouring on plantations when it suited them. Afro-Trinidadian capacity for hard work, often went unnoticed by negrophobes like Thomas Carlyle, Anthony Trollope and James Anthony Froude, who construed the dignity of passive resistance as indolence and a mark of ethnic inferiority, was tested by farmers of small holdings.[235]

> ...In Trinidad there are 18,000 freeholders, most of them negroes and representatives of the old slaves. Their cabins are spread along the road on either side, overhung with breadfruit trees, tamarinds, calabash trees, out of which they make their cups and water jugs; the luscious granadilla climbs among the branches; plantains throw their cool shade over the doors; oranges and limes and citrons perfume the air,

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[235] See Gordon Lewis Main Currents of Caribbean Thought: The historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in its Ideological Aspects, 1492-1900 Chapter 3 The eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: The Proslavery Ideology. 1983 pp.94-170.

> and droop their boughs under the weight of their golden burdens. There were yams in the gardens and cows in the paddocks, and cocoa bushes loaded with purple or yellow pods. Children played about in swarms, in happy idleness and abundance, with schools, too, at intervals, and an occasional catholic chapel, for the old religion prevails in Trinidad, never having been disturbed. What form could human life assume more charming than that which we were now looking on? Once more, the earth does not contain any peasantry so well off, so well cared for, so happy, so sleek and contented as the sons and daughters of the emancipated slaves in the English West Indian Islands...[236]

This ability to gain economic independence in areas cleared by slashing and burning rain forest contributed to the frustrations of planners who balanced the equation of supply and demand by proposing that freed slaves would return to the field as free agents or wage earners,[237] competing in the fields for ranks rewarded by higher wages and elevated status. But the ex-slaves preferred to work as it suited them, usually at crop time when it was most *profitable* and *more interesting*.[238] The drudgery could be done by workers who had no better options available to them: *immigrants*.

In April 1839[239] the Trinidad Agricultural and Immigration

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[236] James Anthony Froude The English in the West Indies or, the Bow of Ulysses 1892 p.78

[237] Wage earners might best be seen in this context as indirect forced labour to complete Adam Smiths Supply and Demand curve, where an over-supply of labour kept wages down to profit employers.

[238] Freedom was linked with increased personal dignity and personal responsibility...in fact a total shift in responsibility. Before emancipation the planters had to look after slave welfare, food, housing, clothing supplies, medical attention etc, now this was passed on to the slave. Old slaves who had known nothing else would have a hard time of it. And the plight of the old slave was often used as an excuse to keep the whole system of 'paternalistic' slavery in tact before emancipation.

Society had been formed under William Burnley (of Orange Grove Estate, Tacarigua and now a fleet owner) to procure a labouring class. It was hoped that competition among labourers would attract ex-slaves back to the plantations at wages best suited to the landowners.

Between 1840 and 1860 Trinidad received Ex-Slaves from other West Indian Islands, Americans, liberated Africans, East indians from Calcutta, Portuguese from Fayal[240] , Portuguese from Madeira, Other Europeans.[241] and Chinese indentured labour.

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239. Check this date as Michael Anthony gives the date as 1838?

240. Michael Anthony *Ibid* Petition to the Governor of Trinidad "This humble petition of the undersigned subjects of the Crown of Portugal respectfully sheweth...that with many others of their countrymen, they were induced by certain evil-disposed persons, under false pretenses, to quit their native country, Fayal, to become agricultural labourers in this Colony. Of the whole number thus cajoled, one third only are still in existence, the rest having fallen victims to the unhealthiness of the climate or to the unhealthiness of the slavery system by which we, equally with the unfortunate blacks, have been subjected. ...Men, women, and children have suffered the greatest misery and oppression on the several estates where they have been forced to work far beyond their strength, by coercion of the whip, without proper shelter at night or adequate food during the day... Your Excellency will be pleased to collect together the few Portuguese labourers yet in existence in this Colony, and that you will be pleased to transport them back to their native country...The petition was signed by eight of the surviving members." pp.124-125.

241. Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 ...676 Europeans arrived in 1839. Letter to the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* 18 November 1842:...'Sir,.. While our ears are made to ring from day to day with cries on behalf of the benighted Africans... is there no voice, not one solitary whisper heard, for the white slaves who are filling our hospitals with sick and or streets with corpses?... For the white man there is no sound of comfort. Enticed from his happy home in Ireland, Germany or France, by placards lying in every line, he comes out here in some filthy steerage - stuffed under hatches like a truss of hay; his food, the junk of the common seaman, his drink, hot, fiery rum. ...' When the group of 15 May 1840 arrived, Sir Henry Macleod protested strongly to the French Government declaring that these immigrants should not have been allowed to come to Trinidad in the light of the disastrous experience of the earlier groups. And of course since, as in the words of the Immigration Ordinance, these people

The first source of labour came from other Caribbean islands. William Burnley, agent appointed by Council of Government 1838 lured ex-slaves from Antigua, Barbados and Grenada by offering better wages and conditions. Between 1839 and 1849, 10,278 West Indian ex-slaves arrived.[242] But ex-slaves followed the example of local ex-slaves and took up small holdings. There was a core of ex-slaves who were particularly industrious and successful, particularly the Americans who had been granted land in 'Company' villages and at Manzanilla. Burnley's efforts to attract Free Americans were singularly unimpressive. It took 8 years to attract 1,000 Americans to Trinidad. By 1848 Lord Harris wrote that only 148 remained on estates most of the others had returned to America. The disgruntled Americans spread the news that conditions in Trinidad were considerably worse than anything offered in America which impeded Burnley's plan to recruit labour from this

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were not accustomed to labouring under 'tropical conditions', such immigration was illegal. In the face of Sir Henry's censure, direct immigration from Europe ceased. pp.131-133.
Portuguese from Madeira.. of the 200 immigrants that arrived in May 1846, nearly half were dead by the end of the year. Portuguese immigrants fleeing Funchal were an unusual immigrant class..they were Reformed Church of Scottish Covenanters who had been forced to leave Catholic Madeira...these immigrants fared better than their other countrymen. They were welcomed by protestants in Catholic Trinidad. The total number of Madeirans in Trinidad was over 1,000 people. The new Madeirans kept themselves united and tightly knit and became merchants selling dry goods. They did nought to aid the planter. pp.133-135.

242. Statistics given in Brereton A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962. 1981 p.96
Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 ... In the ten years between 1839 and 1849 more than 10,000 West Indian ex-slaves came...but they quickly followed the local example and moved into towns or squatted on Crown Lands. However, there was a core of ex-slaves who were particularly industrious and successful, particularly the Americans in 'Company' Villages, and at Manzanilla. p.125.

source.[243]

In 1841 liberated Africans who had been captured from foreign vessels engaged in illegal slave trading were introduced from Sierra Leone While they were in Sierra Leone they had been in contact with European languages, customs and Christian doctrine.

> ...on 20 May 1841 Governor Sir Henry Macleod could write to the British Secretary of State, Lord John Russell: 'I hasten to inform your Lordship of the arrival of 181 immigrants from Sierra Leone...These people arrived in good condition after a passage of 28 days, and I was rejoiced to find them much more advanced in every way than I had expected - all speaking good English and many able to read and write.'[244]

In the ten years between 1841 and 1851 3,000 immigrants came from Freetown and similar numbers from other African depots. Emigration of liberated Africans to Trinidad lasted twenty years - 1841 to 1861. When this source was depleted only 6,500 people had emigrated. "Kind words and promises could not dim the spectre of slavery." The late arrivals were tribal and spoke in traditional tongues. They remained together and did not assimilate into the mainstream until the twentieth century. The Radas from Dahomey settled in Belmont and other African groups lived in the East Dry River section of Port of Spain.[245] Apparently the new arrivals intrigued Dr. Louis de Verteuil at the time, as he was to comment:

> Newly imported Africans are ...industrious and

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[243] Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 pp.126-127

[244] Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 pp.128-130

[245] See Andrew Carr's thesis on the Rada Community in Belmont... East Port of Spain is the area where women subjects for this study reside today.

> laborious, but avaricious, passionate, prejudiced, suspicious... and still adhering to heathenish practices... The *Yarribas* or *Yarrabas*... are a fine race, tall and well proportioned; some of them with fine features, intelligent, reflective, and seeming to appreciate the benefits of civilization and Christianity. The women are mostly occupied in petty trade or huckstering; some also in the culture of ground provisions; their houses are neat, comfortable, and kept in perfect order within. In character they are generally honest, and in disposition proud, and even haughty... cases are rare in which a Yarraba is brought before a magistrate for theft, breach of contract or other misdemeanor.[246]

In the 1840's by some quirk in European fashions in wines interest in fortified Madeiran wines dropped and Madeirans looked to immigration to improve their lot. *1,298 Madeirans* arrived in Trinidad to work on estates but their mortality rates were high. Those who survived the tropical diseases and working conditions, moved into towns to start market gardens or become shop keepers. Those who were more successful continued their passage to the opportunities of the United States.[247]

In this same period *2,500 Chinese indentured immigrants* arrived. But the Chinese government insisted on a *free return passage* after the five year contract was completed.[248] However, apart from this unforeseen bureaucratic hitch, the Chinese proved quite unsatisfactory as indentured labourers. There were frequent complaints about their lawlessness and it was thought that many preferred to spend time in gaol rather than labour under indenture as local prisons were regarded favourably after the Chinese prisons.[249] The Chinese protested any physical ill-treatment and would come from neighbouring estates in an organized attack on any planter or person who had violated a code of ethics understood (only) by the Chinese. "They were always seeking to gain the upper hand when they had numerical strength." In 1865 and 1866 there were riots in Couva and Chaguanas when Chinese labourers organized an attack on police who had ill-treated one of their kind. It seemed ironic that creoles so newly emancipated from bonded serfdom, sided with the police against the labourers.[250]

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[246] Louis de Verteuil Trinidad 1856 p.175.

[247] Refer to Michael Anthony for the two migrations of Portuguese..the protestants verses the catholics and the two sets of conditions attendant on their arrival to make sense of the mortality rates.

[248] The Kung Convention called for...free passages home at the expiration of 5 years and if the worker did not go home, then he should be given the passage money.

The more pressure was applied to extract labour the more indolent the Chinese worker became. "In one set of statistics we learn that the Exchange estate at Couva was allotted 112 Chinese workers ...By the end of the first year 19 had remained, 49 were in prison, and 44 absconded."[251] There was much ambivalence about the Chinese, they were described as ambitious, as indolent, as dangerous, as industrious, and persevering. But their labour was of little benefit to the planter; that is - until the frustrated planter released the 'nuisance' - and then Chinese industry miraculously returned. On their own market garden plots and in commercial enterprises they flourished. The Chinese grocer became so ubiquitous that this occupation was stereotyped by this race.[252]

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[249]. Louis de Verteuil mentioned that there were a large number of Chinese prisoners in the gaol charged with incurring debts. But we learn that this was caused by a language problem and that when the Chinese were given an interpreter to explain the terms of their contracts they paid up and were released.

[250]. MIchael Anthony Profile Trinidad 1975 pp.144-150

[251]. Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 p.147

The Chinese adopted the same tactics as the African slaves before them in resisting their subordination by simply becoming 'stubborn, obstinate and prone to suicide... but the best labourers in the Colony'[253] . In their first year on the island disease killed 20% of their number. And then there were problems of opium addiction and peculiar habits. "Gaming, in general, and whe-whe in particular, made the Chinese the objects of special police vigilance."[254] However, unlike the previous batch of Chinese immigrants (under Hislop 1807) these immigrants took concubines (or were 'taken' by concubines) and this made for very successful entrepreneurial ventures. The Chinese 'wives' who were paid by the government to come to Trinidad were usually hastily acquired by agents and allocated to labourers. However, as soon as these women reached Trinidad they were either thrown out by the men or walked out on them as Chinese women were not bound by indenture and were free to move as they saw fit.

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[252] See Donald Wood Trinidad in Transition:The Years After Slavery 1968 pp.160-170; Charles Kingsley At Last: Christmas in the West Indies 1871 talked about the best houses belonging to the Chinese and the wealthy Chinamen would dress their wives .."bedizening their wives on the high days and holidays...with things expensive and really worth their cost, especially silks and brocades, and then sending them, whether for fashion or for loyalty's sake, to an English church."

[253] Louis de Verteuil Trinidad 1856 p.178

[254] Michael Anthony *Ibid* 1975 p.148.

Immigration was proving singularly unsuccessful in providing willing, docile workers for the cane fields and so agricultural entrepreneurs had to invent a scheme where labour would be coerced within the confines of law, but the immigrants would not be 'slaves'. *Indenture* was the solution and the East Indian was the focus of immigration after 1844. In three years *2,392* Indian labourers came. Their period of indenture was five years and then they were to be repatriated if they did not renew their contract for another term.

1845-1917 saw *143,939* East Indian immigrants arrive in Trinidad. In order to keep these labourers the government offered Indian *males* ten acres of land after 10 years of indenture (between 1869 and 1880). The land meant that the return passage was relinquished:

> Thus by some curious irony, the sugar planter who in the seventeenth century and eighteenth centuries, refused to grant land to the white indentured servant who after emancipation, tried to prevent the purchase of land by the former slaves, found himself obliged in the nineteenth century to grant land to the indentured immigrant in order to reduce the expense of immigrant labour. Indian immigration designed to compete with the Negro landowners, ended in the establishment of a class Indian landowners.[255]

During the Government of Lord Harris there would be widespread abuse of the immigrants who were transported to labour in Trinidad. Dr. John Davy (1854) noted that East Indian women suffered from a kind of abuse 'well authenticated' in Trinidad by managers and overseers. In the case given Davy mentions a manager who had seven women accounted as labourers but all seven were pregnant also on his account! The East Indian women though coerced into sexual liaisons with their 'superiors' in the same way as slave women had been coerced in the past, often paid for their 'infidelity' with their lives. Jealous spouses would protect their honour by beheading 'unfaithful' wives.

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[255] Eric Williams History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago 1962 p.121.

The ritual murder of Indian wives suspected of adultery gave local residents the impression that this population was dangerous and given to violent outbursts. Dr. Louis de Verteuil recalled the trial of one Rataram who 'chopped-up' his spouse Titaree in a case of *honour vs. fidelity* and Sir John Gorrie found the poor husband not guilty of murder but guilty of 'loving not wisely but too well'. Sir John also thought it was 'abundantly clear' that the doctor was the 'real murderer' in the case.[256] It was sometimes impossible to convince husbands that they had done anything wrong; a problem with righteous crimes!

> Between 1859 and 1863...twenty-seven murders were committed by Indians, and in each case the victim was the wife or mistress of the murderer.[257]

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[256] For a full account of this case see A. de Verteuil 1973 p.121 and an article by Bridget Brereton in the Caribbean Journal of History (1980) about Gorrie the Radical Judge in the Caribbean.

[257] Quoted in Donald Wood Trinidad in Transition 1968 p.154. There are still cases of 'chop-ups' reported in the Trinidad newspapers today. Also there is a high incidence of 'suicides' among young East indian women. Some suggest that this may be homicide so that several 'bride prices' are paid to the family for one son. Or in some cases, young girls may 'lose' their virginity to their own choice of partner instead of the intended husband. Sacrifice looms conspicuously large in the East Indian psyche. See Vera Rubin and Marisa Zavalloni We Wish to be Looked Upon (1960s).

In a dispatch from Lord Harris March 8, 1848 a record of neglect gives us some indication of the suffering among immigrants and why it may have been more than 'tropical diseases' that carried them off:

> (O)ther cases of great neglect have come to my notice. One I may mention in which it was reported to me that a number of Coolies were in a very wretched condition...thirty or forty were forwarded, and a more wretched set of beings I never beheld, - all in a state of starvation and more or less of disease; though every care was taken of them after their arrival, scarcely any survived. As far as I could learn they had received neither wages, clothing, or medical aid, and but the smallest modicum of food....There have been numerous cases in which great neglect has been shown.
>
> Lord Harris[258]

As 'aliens' they experienced a hostile reception. The stereotype of East Indians that fueled prejudice was the construct of the *'Coolie'*. The East indian was thrifty and saved everything for the future, wore traditional clothing in a society that measured fashion against European models, retained their religious beliefs, language and cuisine; all these differences were interpreted in the negative. The other side of prejudice is *prejudice* and the East Indians in their turn despised the African and both spurned and or ostracized the other with vehemence. East Indian farmers grew the foods they used themselves, including rice, and this practice contributed to diversification in agriculture. East Indians were predominantly rural and so the separation was maintained by ethnography as well as prejudice.

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[258] Quoted in Davy *Ibid* 1854 p.310.

The British historian, James Anthony Froude (1887) was to write of his visit to an East Indian village:

> (T)he houses when we came among them, seemed merely enlarged *packing cases* loosely nailed together and raised on stones a foot or two from the ground. The rest of the scene was *picturesque* enough.
>
> The Indian jewellers were sitting cross legged before their charcoal pans, making silver bracelets and earrings. Brilliant garments, crimson and blue and orange, were hanging to dry on clothes lines. Men were going out to their work, women cooking, children (not many) playing and munching sugar cane, while great mango trees and ceibas spread a cool green roof over all. Like Rachel, the *coolies* had brought their gods to their new home.
>
> ..The coolies are *useful creatures*. Without them sugar cultivation...would cease altogether. They are *useful* and they are singularly *ornamental*...There is little crime among the negroes who *quarrel furiously but with their tongues only. The coolies have the fiercer passions of their Eastern blood*. ...A coolie regards his wife as his property, and if *she is unfaithful to him he kills her without the least hesitation*... The coolie comes to work. The negro does not want to work, and both are satisfied...The Asiatic insists the more on his *superiority* in the fear perhaps that if he did not *the white might forget it*.[259]

Indian settlements were predominantly rural reinforcing class location and racial segregation. There was no evidence of racial intermarriage with Afro-Trinidadians.[260] East Indian children were not encouraged to seek educational opportunities. Robert Moor wrote to Governor Robertson, March 12, 1890:

> An Indian will not send his child to a Creole

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[259] James Anthony Froude The English in the West indies: or, The Bow of Ulysses 1887 p.76. (my emphases)

[260] Donald Wood *Ibid* 1968 p.154. and James A. Froude *Ibid* 1887, p.74.

> school; he is afraid of injustice being done to his children by the Creole teachers, and of ill usage from Creole pupils. The Creole, as a rule looks down on the Indian, he is a semi-civilized being. He speaks a barbarous tongue and his manners are barbarous. He comes to Trinidad to make money, for there is no money in his own country. He takes work much cheaper than the Creole will do, hence he must be ill-treated when he can be ill-treated with impunity.[261]

East Indian girls, like their Creole counterparts were not sent to school because the benefits of education were not obvious while the roles of young girls in the household helping with food preparation, caring for younger children and carrying out chores were obvious indeed.[262]

17. Anglicization: Cultural Imperialism

In post-emancipation Trinidad (after 1840) an Anglicization policy would take a culturally diverse assemblage of immigrants and impose a single cultural mode. At this time Trinidad was multi-cultural and multi-lingual: French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Hindi and English. In fact, the language of the minority would become the lingua-franca. Louis de Verteuil described for us how the new comers very distinct in everyday life:

> The new comers were not yet assimilated and retained their customs and religion. Solemn faced

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[261] Rubin and Zavalloni **We Wish to be Looked Upon** 1969 p.42.

[262] A portrait of Creole contempt and ill usage of East Indian children at Ward School was given in V.S. Naipaul's Novel **A House for Mr Biswas**. The illustration also included irrelevant curriculum material and a boy wearing a female garment because of poverty not because of an absence of masculine standards.

> Chinese could be seen with their pigtails rolled up under their broad brimmed hats, and Indians...in their graceful saris and the men sometimes only in a loin cloth (dhoti) and negro women frequently with turbans on their heads.[263]

Sir Louis de Verteuil's Trinidad (1856) and the biography of this author allows us access to some of the struggles of 'foreigners' or 'aliens' for retention of their cultural identity and political might during the period of *Anglicization*. Sir Louis de Verteuil represented the Catholic and French sectors of the population in a time when the Attorney General, Charles Warner was pursuing the course of making English language and English culture supreme in a multi cultural setting.

In this struggle to maintain cultural heritage and identity, those nominated as 'aliens' by the English referred to themselves as 'Trinidadians'. This little 'skit' written around 1860 illustrates some stereotypes of this multi-cultural society and betray a French Trinidadian authorship:

> My father Juan Pedro was Venezuelan, and my mother Marie Claire was Guadeloupian...I am a Trinidadian having been conceived at Monkey Town and born at Bourg-Bamboo; and consequently every bit as English as the Honourable Messrs. Big Pockets and Co. and all their clique. And suppose that every individual thus born, must change his foreign name, Anglicize himself, like my illustrious merchant friend Tsin Quang who signs himself Bobby Jackson.[264]

Cultural disjunction in Trinidad in the latter half of the

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263. quoted in A. de Verteuil 1973 p.60.

264. Quoted in Anthony de Verteuil *Ibid* 1973 p.9.

nineteenth century was rife, as the Attorney General pursued this Anglicization policy, contending that:

> The habits and feelings of the inhabitants must be purely British, and consider it as a taint in those who, though not the less loyal to their adopted a government, do not exhibit them; thus making no allowance for the inborn predilections of ancestry, or the fatherland and acting in a manner to inspire the people with an aversion to those very habits, and an alienation from those feelings. They account it almost a crime, on the part of foreigners, to be unable to speak a language with which the latter are unacquainted; and yet they have never even encouraged the establishment of schools in those parts of the island wherein, from the altogether foreign elements of the population, the English language is totally unknown. This is naturally regarded by the majority of natives, as a gross injustice.[265]

Dr. Louis de Verteuil illustrated his point by adding a table indicating population by place of birth although it was customary to define oneself by the country of ancestral origin rather than by country of birth at this time.[266] However, the meaning of cultural imperialism in the making of the 'Afro-Saxon' was imprinted on the lives of those who experienced this link between political, social and economic legitimacy and cultural hegemony. The history of multi-racial and multi-cultural Trinidad after the rejection of Roman Catholic Church and Government affiliation by

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[265] Louis de Verteuil *Ibid* 1856 p.174.

[266] National Distributions July 1, 1851

Natives of Trinidad	40,584
Natives of Africa	8,150
Natives of Europe	1,508
Natives of Asia	4,200
Emigrants	15,158
Total	69,600

Louis de Verteuil 1856 p.174.

Governor MacLeod in 1840 is one where cultural hegemony set in motion a push for a uniform society where social acceptance and mobility would be dimensioned along the lines of a new England. 267

Patrick Keenan's report on Education in Trinidad (1869) recommended a higher surveillance of teachers to encourage higher standards throughout the system. Keenan remarked that the school system was a disgrace to any society that respected the idea of civilization in its definition of education. There was no attempt to match the cultural background of the teacher with that of the pupils to be instructed and the odious face of racism produced a melange of ignorance, prejudice and a plague of absenteeism. He thought competence might better be served by making salaries correlate with results on public examinations as well are experience and training. Keenan also recommended that female teachers be recruited to bolster the number in the ranks to cope with the task of extending educational opportunities at the primary level throughout the island. By around 1890 nearly half of Trinidad's children were thought to be attending no school at all; a large proportion of these were Indian children. Most Negro children attended a primary school but regular attendance was a problem for poorer families and girls in particular.[268]

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267. Derek Walcott has a poem called 'Lines of New England' about the schooling system being the agency of anglicization and cultural uniformity in West Indian society.

268. Bridget Brereton 1972 p.192.

18. Colonialism: Afro-Trinidadian Emergence

The history of class and race conflict is a record of Black intellectuals articulating visions of change and gaining access to careers that were traditionally the enclaves of white males. The times were ripe for a new racial awareness to challenge ideologies that effectively suppressed a movement of the people. Pride of race and a revised understanding of historical events were essential to a *conscientization*[269] that carried a race out of cultural bondage. Themes of revival and redemption are powerful among West Indian people to this day.[270]

In the metropol, the people of colour were powerful orators and lobbyists in the passage out of slavery. In London intellectuals were effective in lending a voice for colonial practice. Towards the end of the 19th century another force for Afro-liberation was coming together as scholars met from British colonies across the globe. The Pan African Association was inaugurated by a Trinidadian lawyer, H.S. Williams in 1897. Thus, an ambitious middle class of Afro-Colonials were giving voice to racial pride and African heritage at a time when the social ladder seemed to gather rungs to frustrate their kind. Reshaping images is a powerful force in the struggle positive identity and the eviction of stereotypes.

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[269] Conscientization was a term coined by Paulo Friere to mean a liberating knowledge for political awareness and action.

[270] G.P. Simms PhD thesis on Michael Manley (1985) shows that this imagery is currently used for political mileage to this very day.

At this time in Trinidad J. J. Thomas's **Froudacity: West indian Fables by James Anthony Froude** offers a brilliant debunking of this famous historian's book, **The English in the West indies, or The Bow of Ulysses on the West Indies**. This remarkable book allowed readers to critically examine perceptions of people and events from the standpoint of West Indian experience. It is significant that C.L.R. James would draw on Merleau-Ponty to understand the synthesis of black intellectual development in West Indian History. James likened Thomas to Kant as:

> One who sees the issue clearly, and who has a command of language in its wealth and its purity, and who is possessed of an imagination that is fertile and effective in presenting his ideas, and whose heart, withal, turns with lively sympathy to what is truly good.[271]

The voices of Afro-Caribbean pride and essential dignity were ever clear, but it would be an omission to assume that every liberated African or African Creole affirmed his or her identity in the same way. The poor or jamette class would perhaps seek more open expression of African cultural forms as pride of race challenged the cultural invasion of things European and especially things Anglo-Saxon after 1840. Errol Hill's **Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre**. (1972) saw a parallel between the History of Trinidad's carnival and 'the history of the common people's struggle for freedom of expression from the misguided paternalism inherent in colonial rule'[272]

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[271] Quoted by James in his Introduction to Froudacity 1969 (edition) pp.43-44.

[272] Errol Hill **Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre** 1972

Carnival, rooted in the orgiastic tradition of Roman Bacchanalia and Saturnalia, was transformed from the from the genteel round of fetes among French Roman Catholic plantocrats into the fantastic theatre of the jamettes with the stamp of African performance arts and cultural exuberance. The European expression was overlaid with jamette humour, Afro rhythms and musical forms, the chanterelle and kaiso innovative performances, the masking from Guinea - so detested by Colonial government. Carnival also assumed AFro-religious elements from West Africa and thus, the *persona* or mask of carnival revealed so much more than the mask concealed and beneath this flamboyance and revelry was a jamette; a person who was pitifully poor for the other 364 days of the year.

In 1833, the wearing of masks was banned as ex-slaves used them as cover for petty crime. Mr. Peake, the assistant to the Chief of Police was the victim of an attack that was reported in the *Port of Spain Gazette* (January 22, 1833). In fact, this same newspaper's editorials saw post emancipation Carnival as an outrage of public decency, noisy revelry and a disturbing accompaniment from 'inelegant instruments'. And as the English could not distinguish between Barbarism, Savagery and African forms all attempts were made to suppress expression of these elements. In fact, the urban slum dwellers were considered to be unsavoury in every way. And what was even more disturbing, the jamette class of urban slum dwellers; the singers, prostitutes, bad Johns, dancers, stickmen, and maids were showing that they were capable of organizing this festive event. From Corbeaux Town, Shanty Town, Laventille and East Dry River the wretched peoples would come pheonix-like out of their poverty, stench and filth to dance and assert their freedom.

A distinct thread of derision ran through the mocked pretensions of decency and buffoonery. The masqueraders mocked all forms of visible control that had become symbols of their oppression during slavery. Carnival was an opportunity to mock through caricatures of authority under the umbrella of having fun and being jolly. The military, royalty, upper class etiquette, the police, politicians, local merchants and businessmen and their wives were all rich sources for the clever use of theatre. According to Hill (1972) the characters that issued into the streets said more about the society than it did about seasonal laxity and the outrage of public decency. This was a cultural expression and it was the creation of the lowest order of people in the land, the urban unemployed. The aristocratic French elite had dressed up as garden slaves, while the jamette revellers dressed as kings and queens.

The underworld that took to the streets was a subculture within the socio-political and economic structure, but Carnival revealed a sure demonstration that here was the incubus of a vibrant Afro-Trinidadian culture. And where once the French elite danced in their finery in the streets just before Lent, the ex-slave was now exuberant.[273] However, the idea of rubbing shoulders with exslaves masquerading with a definite African beat and style did not very much appeal to the traditional celebrants and so a coup was won by those who had been emancipated and were now making freedom in their own style in the streets across Trinidad.

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[273] p.49

Carnival had become the festival that affirmed Afro-Trinidadian cultural heritage, while the East Indian community in Trinidad celebrated their own religious festivals to affirm their link with a cultural tradition. These celebrations were an earnest attempt to fight the disjunction that was set in motion by an insistence on Anglicization; the hegemonic push of the governing culture. The emotional and symbolic links were valuable ideational and identity loaded experiences. The authorities reacted with repressive measures designed to suppress these expressions of separate identity on an island peopled by many 'nations'.[274]

After the Carnival Riots of 1881 and 1884 and the Hosein Massacre in SanFernando 1884 the authorities were forced to reflect on this spilling of blood over festivities whose dancing honoured the skill of the drummers who were the pride of musical performance artists among the jamettes and among those who listened to the tassa drumming.[275] The drumming was banned by authorities

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273. Carnival ends on Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. In days gone by there would be no more dancing or music, and there would be disciplined habits of abstinence, fasting and meditation to prepare for Easter in the religious calendar.

274. To this day the different subcultures are referred to as 'nations'. Hesta (64 yrs) refers to homosexuals as a 'hated nation'. A nation is a group set apart by social values and ascriptive distinctions or by assuming a separate status through internal consensus.

and the display of martial arts at Camboulay[276] was stopped by bans on central features of the displays. The carrying of sticks and whips were banned, transvestism and obscenity (usually included in the Dame Lorraine and Le Maitre d'ecole) were prohibited, Pierrots were required to obtain a license and censorship silenced the misunderstood as well as the banal. But being creative, the characters were transformed and the craft of words and gestures replaced the sticks and other less subtle implements of cultural combat. Carnival characters were transformed but remained basically 'unchanged' on the matter of issuing a statement or message.[277]

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275. In both African and East Indian communities the drummer was recognized with awe and so here was a point of cross cultural contact. It is not unusual to see drummers of either nation performing across the margin. That is an Afro-drummer at an East Indian religious event or an East Indian tassa drummer with an African band.

276. Camboulay comes from the French patois for the burning of cane as this was the season for harvesting the cane. See the little publication written by **The Mighty Chalk Dust** for the definition of Camboulay. Also see Pearce and Hill to cross check.

277. Common carnival characters that have been re emerging in the jour ouvert section of modern carnival: Jab molassi, devils, mud/grease/green men, Gros Pierrot, Pierrot Grenade, Wild Indian, Yankee, Sailors and Marines, fancy sailor, baby doll, Policemen, Papa Bois, Dame Lorraine, Midnight Robber, Douens, Beast & Devil, Dragon King, Lucifer.. These characters reappear year after year and still convey poignant messages. It would be essential for psycho-history to see how these characters emerged out of a context. eg. Dame Lorraine would come out of the hypocrisy of French aristocrats having slave concubines while pretending that this was a missionary effort at civilizing Africans. In this dance (all male) the African dancer is reclaiming ground that is lost in the process of emasculation. This is making an impact on slave women, French men and women, and on the attitude to the two cultures in an anglicized contemporary culture. It is important that the balance between banality and refinement stay delicately balanced so that the art is given to the dancer. The object is to protect oneself from reprisal by claiming to be dancing and having fun. Here is the mastery of symbols from both cultures being employed in the battle for affirmation and emancipation by those who have kept alive the link with African heritage

The retention of African cultural forms and expressions indicates some measure of their contemporary social significance. This theme will be particularly prominent in the battle for political independence in the mid twentieth century. Carnival has within it memories and legacies of an African culture but it is not constrained by fidelity to folkloric repertoires. Like other cultural expressions, it continues to fulfill needs in the community and it continues to be created out of memories in dialogue with contemporary influences, political hypocrisy, social values and figures prominent in public life.[278]

Port of Spain in 1860 had a population of *29,468* with 40% of the population born outside the island, 'away'.[279] The neat layout of the town (thanks to the efforts of Governor Woodford) was marred by the uncontrolled squatter dwellings whose inhabitants belonged to the service sector and unemployed sectors of the city. These squatters and barrack yard dwellers, without water or sanitation or comfort, lived too close to the earth to afford the luxury of privacy. Fetes would siphon the resentments of common antagonisms but from time to time bands would harbour hostilities and factions would gather loyal followers. There was

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in the New World.

[278] See Albert Gomes Through a Maze of Color for the stories of the conscious strategy of widening the schism between the creole cultures and the English culture in the wages of political independence. This is like a cybernetic construction of schizmogenesis or ambiguity; or as is said in East Port-of-Spain, making commess or confusion to manipulate for self interest. Here we will craft socio-genesis and the cultural strategic arsenal employed in the struggle for another emancipatory action in Trinidad and Tobago history.

rivalry among the poor, as there is rivalry at all other echelons of society. The chanterelle was known for his powerful comments, pithy character sketches, gross or subtle insults and general ability for knowing how to pitch words, rhythm, volume and tone in scenes of 'battle' with another rival. Individual combat marked camboulay. Here the talents of stickfighters, Pierrots, Whipmen, Fancy Sailors and Dame Lorraines were pitched in fierce battle to aggrandize themselves and their expert execution of dance sequences or martial arts agility and speed.[280]

The serving classes; the maids, cooks, washerwomen, seamstresses, yard boys, hucksters or vendors, stable boys and prostitutes lived in barrack yards. However, their art of mimicry, mockery and buffoonery indicates that their knowledge of those they served was as thorough as it was merciless in showing the cracks in images of respectability, the mistakes, biases, and all manner of hypocrisy. Among the powers of the weak or marginalized groups is not only to 'know better', but to know their 'betters' very well. An anatomy of mainstream middle class values is essential for employees, especially in the service sector of the economy. This knowledge becomes a survival tool and can be exploited by those who live by their wits and their will.

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279. Andrew Pearce (1956) "Carnival in Nineteenth Century Trinidad" p.550

280. See Errol Hill The Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre (1972) for descriptions of carnival. The attitude to carnival according to the Mighty Dougla is expressed in the rhyme: "You got the great long wall of China, And the Indian Taj Mahal, I know that the greatest wonder of them all is my Trinidad Carnival." Roger Abrahams Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the emergence of Creole Culture (1983) looks at the continuities in Caribbean folk events and

> Thus there existed a jamette subculture...Its bearers were often recognizable by gait and dress, and were organized in bands for gambling, stickfighting and *exploiting women*. The qualities they boasted included skill and bravery in "bois" or stickfighting, sharpness of wit and repartee in conversation and in song, talent in dance and music, indifference to law and authority, and great sexual accomplishments. ...a flamboyant rejection of the norms of the superstructure. The labouring classes generally, to which they belonged, aspired to respectability, but they felt excluded from enjoyment of the fruits of their aspirations by their colour, traditional mores, lack of education and poverty, and took vicarious delight, both covert and overt, in seeing it overturned and ridiculed by the jamettes.[281]

19. Constitutional and Labour Reform - Cipriani.

If the story of nineteenth century economic history in Trinidad was a tale of an agricultural economy the twentieth century would announce a new theme: *oil*. At this same time rigid prejudices of race and class assignment would be redefined within an ideology based on Anglicization and education. History has revealed to us that power is never offered up but bargained for and won. With education came a key for upward mobility and access to precincts that traditionally were the province of white men only. But as so often happens, knowledge is only part of the story of political transformation all beit an important feature.

There are certain historic events that point to powerful ineq-

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shows how carnival performances echo of African heritage in their style as well in some specific forms.

uities that have long been 'known' and never given a flagrant demonstration because the official superficial covering has never been caught off guard. The story that followed World War I would provide that spark for an impetus already set in motion recognition of racial discrimination so admirably articulated by J.J. Thomas[282] and by advocates of the Pan African Association that had established branches in Trinidad in 1901 formed a basis for concerted political action.

The treatment of the West Indian Regiment during World War I embittered soldiers who had been in contact with the then current thinking among European Socialists. The blatant racism of the British towards the West indian regiment ignited the fire on an issue that was seething in local consciousness and gathering momentum for expression; racism in the career and employment structure of the colony had to be confronted in some formally recognized manner. Local advocacy of pride of one's race was more than a glance without shame into the mirror, it was an announcement of 'war' on complacency where colour was placed before merit and power assigned according to complexion in this pigmentocracy. It was also 'war' on a constitution that crippled local interests.

The disenchanted regiment had shifted awareness and politicized many Trinidadians. The Trinidad Workers Association (TWA) was formed 1979 after the Royal Commission and the march towards constitutional reform was set in motion. The importation

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281. Andrew Pearce *Ibid* 1956 p.551-552.

of East Indians had ended in 1917 and an urban drift was overwhelming facilities in towns and more importantly, the labourers of the fields were seeking a livelihood away from the plantations. Unemployment and low wages together with appalling conditions gave impetus to the TWA at a time when agitation was making cracks in the superstructure. The *1918 Habitual Idlers Ordinance* would galvanize the movement for reform.

At the close of 1919 the country was virtually strike bound and Afro-Trinidadian police officers seemed *improperly motivated* in protecting *scab* labourers and suppressing riots. The colonial governments answer to labour unrest was to institute more repressive measures. Garveyite and socialist literature was banned by a *Sedition Ordinance in 1920* which effectively promoted strong interest in *Pan-Africanism, Garveyism and socialism.* When one considers that the major pastimes among the wretched illiterate classes could not have been reading the ordinance succeeded only in rousing interest for 'seditious' materials. This was a time when drumming was regulated, Spiritual Baptists were banned, Calypsonians were censored, masking was forbidden and Afro-Creole cultural elements were generally legislated against. Thus, the 'seditious' material, like the cultural expressions of ancestral ethnic unity found its way through channels well worn in the underworld.

In 1923 Captain A. A. Cipriani became president of the TWA and the first local council elections saw victory for the union movement when Cipriani was elected to Council in 1925. Cipriani articulated the voice of the non-voting majority in the halls of council; a very lonely voice in the company of councilors at the time.

20. The Great Depression and Commissions of Enquiry

The 1930's were dark years for all as the Great Depression showed only too well that those hardest hit were those who knew poverty before its ranks were swelled. Cipriani lost his grip on the TWA as he became entrapped by legitimate structures in the struggle for constitutional reform. The spirit of reform was not really located in the official channels of these times and so radical trade unionists placed their interests in alternative methods for gaining fundamental changes in working conditions and social conditions.

The Wood Commission of 1922 was the official route to reform and like most inquiries it was a conservative approach where penmanship and legalistic jargon loomed so large that problems of code definition over-whelmed problems of conduct. This route was not designed for the hungry but the digestion of government on the significance of poverty and its potential dangers to stability/investment.

Uriah (Buz) Butler had become the new oracle of the people as Cipriani grew more conservative and declined in popularity. This charismatic leader with his bible in hand and many memorized verses shouted in the wilderness as Joshua to a people who had waited too long under promises of freedom to wait again on commissions of enquiry for their redemption. Butler conjured with images that the children of the 'Black exodus' heard from their orators among preachers in community congregations where a distinctive interpretation of the gospels had an African brand marked into its *corpus*.[283]

The National Unemployment Movement mobilized the urban poor and later formed the Negro Welfare, Cultural and Social Association (NWA) in 1934. In this same year the (after the Trade Union Ordinance of 1932) the TWA was restructured and renamed the Trinidad Labour Party (TLP). The political intentions of union mobility were plain in the label. To outline the growth in political awareness among Trinidad workers and the unemployed in the thirties is too daunting a task for this thesis, but it is important to note that women were very active in the NWA.[284] *Elma Francios* and *Christina King* were recognized leaders and spokespersons for the association.

This growing political awareness was in tandem with growing racial consciousness. This was both an advantage and a stumbling block as issues could be compounded by the complex system of values that made political action more like running through a mine field of intense and conflicting interests. At this time there

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282. J.J. Thomas Froudacity and The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar.

283. See Glenda Simms Michael Manley PhD Thesis University of Alberta 1985 for an analysis of this style among Jamaican politicians.

were a growing number of 'Afro-Saxons' in the ranks of the middle class with aspirations for promotion within the Civil Service. These Civil Servants made every effort and many sacrifices to 'fit' comfortably into the 'legitimate' structure of Colonial social values. However, within this same middle class there were radical intellectuals who offended their ambitious counterparts by provoking their conscience about social background, cultural heritage, about slavery and this continued insult of colonial rule.

The political climate was giving rich and poor Trinidadians a sense of their place and their relative status within the empire. Radical intellectuals conducted a search for identity in the local setting. The Beacon distinguished itself by being *anti*: anti-Catholic, anti-Government, anti-Colonialist, anti-Capitalist to name a few but it was generally a vehicle for discovering identity through a series of negations of status conferring institutions amongst the respectable members of the middle class. It sympathized with the spirit of the Russian Revolution and empathized with the conditions of the poor and oppressed in the urban slums and barrack yards. According to Albert Gomes, "In its chequered 2 years of existence (1931-1933) The Beacon was involved in a libel action, frequent visits from the police, denunciation from the pulpit, pressure from both church and state, increasing opposition from the commercial community, and chronic lack of funds."[285]

The West Indian yard was the focus for literary sketches as

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284. See LaGuerre The Politics of Communalism: The Agony of the Left in Trinidad and Tobago 1930-1955. Pan Caribbean Publications 1975.

the yard was an essential link with jamette identity and recognition of African ancestry. It was here that the world took on an alternative perspective and the voices could be couched in the political awareness of the poor and the vernacular of the poor. Here was the voice that had not been compromised by the privilege of an English education and an apocalyptic denial of a Creole historiography.

Albert Gomes,[286] C.L.R. James, Alfred Mendes, R.A.C. de Boissiere, Beatrice Grieg and others were creating a cultural literary consciousness that was integral to the process of gathering voices to agitate for recognition of an identity that was Trinidadian and West Indian as opposed to an Afro-Saxon ideal. This cultural renaissance was rooted in the same class of people as those who forged their path to freedom with calypsos, Pierrots, stick-fights and all the arts that come to view with camboulay and Carnival masquerades. The literature of The Beacon was based on the common condition of the majority; of pride of race and self worth in community membership. This was the melting pot phenomenon attempting to integrate the various nations and races through promoting recognition of that sense of being Creoles with unique cultural attributes. However, this cauldron was stirred by Creole hands and the stock of the stew was liberally seasoned with 'sugar' and 'spice'. An attempt to link many peoples in the idea of one nation and a Caribbean federation.

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285. Albert Gomes Through a Maze of Color 1974 p.19.

286. Whose father funded The Beacon and whose mother supported it..locate the passages about the mother persuading the father to con-

The 1930's was a turbulent period in Trinidad as global economic conditions worsened. Things were so desperate that there was little to be lost and much to be gained by organizing protests in the form of general strikes, marches, hunger strikes, demonstrations and general agitation for improvement. However, desperate people found individual solutions and there was widespread sporadic violence, lootings, arrests and detentions but no galvanizing leader or unified strategy. The unity of problems, of East Indian labourers , of Afro-Trinidadian workers and the Unemployed were joined in a way that transcended divisions of the past. This link culminated in the island wide riots of 1937 that spread a wave of protest and violence to every shore of the Caribbean.

> In 1937 a crude surgery of murder, riot and arson was applied to the abscessed condition of West Indian society, and the long painful process of draining off the accumulated pus and regenerating the diseased tissue began....It required bloodshed to arouse the sleeping British conscience to the diseased conditions of these neglected possessions.[287]

The dedicated members of the NWA have been largely forgotten but Albert Gomes recalled the deprivations endured and described how his political career was shaped by his involvement in this movement. Gomes' biography Through a Maze of Colour (1974) gives some very matter of fact descriptions of the less publicized faces of politics and trade unionism at the time, especially the intense personal rivalry and the use of trade unionism to bolster politi-

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tinue funding the paper in Through a Maze of Colour 1974.

cal ambitions (like his own):

> Nothing quite so compounds the normally turgid complexities of trade unionism as the intrusion of political motives in its affairs. To make matters worse, leadership was pathetically inexperienced, but with it all, opinionated, assertive and chauvinistic. The advice and guidance which the British T.U.C. provided at this critical stage may well be historically an instance of *colonial paternalism* at its best.[288]

On the other side of the political fence, the riots of 1937 had given authorities cause for action as the voice of labour movements had reached England and influenced the recommendations of the Forster (1937) and Moyne Commissions (1938-39). Meanwhile, the development of modern trade union negotiations and collective bargaining between the interests of labour, employers and Government flourished until the world went to war. The struggle for union recognition was harassed by police brutality and intransigence on the part of employers. In those times discipline was of great importance as employers ignored any differences between them and lined up united when any crunch came.

21. World War II and Cultural Types

During World War II and Annexation, American forces based in Trinidad employed thousands of local workers. Albert Gomes (1974) recalled the clandestine meetings under the traditional

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287. Albert Gomes *Ibid* 1974 p.28.

cover of darkness to organize workers to break the agreement between the Government and the Americans which kept wages parallel with local indexes. Their success here is evident in that locals still recall the winning ways that went with those dollar bills.[289]

At the end of the war Buz Butler was released from gaol. It was thought that his influence on workers in the oil belt was a danger to British interests in times of war. Butler and his followers were dissatisfied with organized trade unionism in a time of rapid inflation, high unemployment and continued racial discrimination in industry.[290] British trade unionist, F.W. Dalley who was called on to investigate union activity in the West Indies, described Butler as .."A curious phenomenon whose egocentricity and biblical references made him a seventeenth century man instead of a modern Trade Union leader."[291]

What was implied was that responsible trade unionism and this popular leader's activities were antithetical. It was this schism that was attacked and exploited for political leverage by Albert

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288. Albert Gomes *Ibid* 1974 p.42

289. Locate excerpts of the characters of the period when Humphrey Bogart was the model of youth and the V.S. Naipaul's Miguel Street community worked for the Yankee dollar or felt the repercussions of this American presence. Also Bernadette Pleasant still talks about those 'blessed Americans' who paid real money. Merle Hodge's Crick Crack Monkey where Mikey goes to work for the Americans.

290. In the oil fields the stratification of personnel was very visible, the best accommodation going to nationals of the parent company, exclusive recreational facilities according to rank and this meant that Black workers were indeed the 'niggers' of this industry.

Gomes and later, Eric Williams. In fact, Williams would recall how Butler would give as much weight to dog licenses in Port of Spain as he did to more pressing issues. However, the other face of Buz Butler remembered by poor women in this study, was his promise of a comprehensive welfare package which included land and housing reform, pensions and a general war on poverty. In fact, Butler wanted the welfare policy of the 'mother country' to be visited on this waif of a colony.[292]

The Americans can be thanked for a final assault on the myth of white superiority. These marines were crude in their racism, their vices showed, their manners lacked the refinement cultivated by the elite in Trinidad (including the Afro-Saxons) but the Americans were generous with their money, impressive with their technology and they got the job done. The Road to Maracas Beach, for example, was considered a grand achievement in technology and diplomacy. The underside of annexation was the rapid increase in prostitution and organized vice:

> Many of the modern Trinidadian types - the sophisticated prostitute, the 'saga-boy', the gang leader - are direct creations of American influence, of 'working for the Yankee dollar', and Derek Bickerton's study of the most famous of all Trinidadian criminals, Boysie Singh, has described how American capitalist culture, funnelled through the filter of the occupying American troops, facilitated the transformation of a small time hoodlum into the king of the Port of Spain underworld,

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291. Brereton A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962 1981 p.190.

292. Look in Patrick Solomon's autobiography for passages on Butler for he is a precious enigma in Trinidad popular politics. According to Mistress J. he was the Father's father...that is...Williams was the direct descendent of Butler carrying the same message forward (Her imagery is from her Spiritual Baptist idiom but then again first Butler and later Williams would be linked to this tradition of preacher /

Chicago-style.[293]

The highly publicized underworld development, however, was not the *alpha* and the *omega* of American influence. The new wealth gave working people chances beyond the hustle for immediate needs. The picaroon or jamette characters now danced to the sweet music of the steel pan.[294] American garbage became the steel drums that were tempered over fires to produce the distinctive sounds of the steel bands that tinkle through the night air in East Port-of-Spain.

Universal suffrage and the double layer of colonization with the economic capital in America and the administration in Britain gave impetus to a new assault on foreign domination. A vanguard of self styled politicians were forged from local interest groups. The character of individualism and self aggrandizement were refracted through the structure of political activism. But like any performance art, the political leader / orator becomes an arrogant egotist without an audience to match the magic with admiration and challenges from the floor. The spoils of office did sometimes over-ride the zeal for people-based political ends among charismatic leaders. Calypsonians and politicians had their seasons but at times it was hard to know who was playing who.

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teacher / orator / leader.)

[293] Gordon Lewis Growth of the Modern West Indies 1968 p.211.

[294] Have a look in Errol Hill's book for a description of the developments among the jamette class during this critical period when the pan was fashioned in yards East Dry River and the Laventille Hills. American drums became the basis of the steel pan, before that music was

Gordon Lewis (1968) commented that a 'bogus radicalism' assumed that 'the more unlettered a candidate was the more capable he was considered of representing the electorate':

> To read biographical sketches of its (Trinidad's) leading figures of the decade after 1946 with their opportunism, their playing to the gallery and their unprincipled perambulations from one 'party' to another is to realize how it all accurately reflected the local racial and religious divisions: Victor Bryan nursing the small farmers of the Eastern counties, Butler and John Rojas the Negro Workers of the oil belt, Roy Joseph the teachers, Ajodhasingh and the dynasty of the Sinanaan brothers the East Indians. ...Bhadase Maraj the American-style ward 'boss' with his political strength in at once his fabulous wealth and his control of the Sanatan Dharam Mahhasabha; the astute Norman Tang whose success seems to have come from his ability never to reveal his inner thoughts...the only minister never to have been accused by the Civil Service of political interference; and of course, the irrepressible 'Bertie' Gomes who despite his capacity to look like a genial photographer was in fact a *politico* whose *forte* was the raucous browbeating of his opponents and the habit of finding new scapegoats every so often for Caribbean ills, ranging, variously, from the American troops, the East Indians, and the 'Reds' in Jamaica.[295]

Within the local society the American presence had not been bland. Gordon Lewis (1968) commenting on Trinidad's politics reported that Trinidad had 'become a roughly hewn combination of British snobbery and American vulgarity. The state of its politics only a consequence and not a cause of that'.[296] The combination of dominant influences would indicate that the time was ripe for another serge in the struggle for political independence and an end to Colonial rule.

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made on tin garbage cans.

[295] Gordon Lewis 1968 *Ibid* pp.209-210.

22. The Rise of Nationalism and Pluralism

Dr. Eric Williams was a brilliant Island Scholar, PhD in West Indian History from Oxford University in England, Faculty member of Howard University, then Research Secretary of the Caribbean Commission. Here was a man well versed in Caribbean Economic History, the person groomed for the political task of cementing the diversity of national groups into a unified multi-racial society. Williams was a Trinidadian cultivating a spirit of nationalism to embrace a movement for ending Colonial government.[297]

The Doctor was the epitome of the philosopher in action. His debates with Dom Basil Matthews at the Library and later the instigation of 'The University of Woodford Square' would offer a grounding for the people in that kind of History that politicizes and energizes. These students were being groomed for the task of constructing a sense of nation in order to strive for that event.[298] *The Peoples National Movement* evolved from the work that Williams was doing in articulating the ideals of a Nation as

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296. Gordon Lewis *Ibid*.1968 p.212

[297] Massa Day Done or Massa Day Dead speech of 1961 is one that jelled the populace behind Williams on the eve of Independence. Part of his style was to use colloquial speech and sayings to indicate clearly his ability to perform as a 'man-of-words' among reputation seekers across within a Creole frame of reference.

[298] Eric Williams became politically involved when his contract was not renewed with the Caribbean Commission. Selwyn Ryan pointed out that Williams went from 'sour grapes' to Prime Minister in that order. Lo-

he saw it:

> (a) democratic party of men and women of honesty and incorruptibility, of all races, colours, classes and creeds, with a coherent and sensible programme of economic, social and political reform aimed at the development of the country as a whole, dedicated to its service, appealing to the intelligence rather than the emotions of the electorate whose political education it places in the forefront of its activities.
>
> Eric Williams 1958
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> 299

C.L.R. James' Party Politics in the West Indies (1962) pointed out that *the Doc* had assimilated those qualities of the British and the Americans that suited him for his *grand charge* to power. His academic style was British, but he had absorbed the pragmatic style of 'getting things done'. He saw through the bluff of manners and conservatism that had seemed designed to obstruct change or progress. It was Williams' ability to unveil that bluff that was used to score political advantage. He would outline the follies of Colonial Government and declare that, "The population of Trinidad and Tobago must be made of the poorest stuff if it cannot improve on more than four and a half centuries of colonialism."[300]

Williams deliberately cultivated the ethic of the 'good citizen' within the context of the local polygot society. He urged Creoles (people born in the Caribbean) to recognize their

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cate the text where Ryan makes this point

299. Quoted in Gordon Lewis *Ibid* 1968 p.212

membership in the Caribbean community. Williams saw the essential aspect of nationalism as forging that link between cultural heritage and local identity, that is, links through history can fashion a people. So if slavery and colonialism were essentially alienating and humiliating, then national independence was to integrate pride of nation with pride of race within Creole society.

The PNM remodelled Carnival as a symbol of national cultural expression. The instigation of the Carnival Development Committee announced PNM's recognition of Creole cultural forms. And it was to be brilliant, creative, festive and affirming. I was not for any concept of catharsis or the flushing of frustrations through a public bacchanal or a general collapse of moral standards; Carnival embraced both the struggle for Afro-Creole equality and the affirmation of identity through the traditional mediums of protest and rebellion, the song and dance of war on oppression.

While Williams was riding the high road of popularity, denouncing colonial rule as appropriate only for cutters of cane to sweeten the tea cups of Europe, the overcrowded barracoons of the Eastern Hills (Clifton Hill, John John, Laventille and Beverley Hill) Shanty Town along Nelson and Duncan Streets and East Dry River, had another idol whose analysis of the situation in Trinidad was every bit as 'bright' as 'the Doctor's'. The calypsonian *Francisco Slinger*, alias *The Mighty Sparrow* from Grenada translated this theme of hope and pride of nation into the lyrics and rhythms that escaped nobody from 'behind the bridge' or 'on de hill'. Sparrow took his seat with the 'monarchy' as a calypso giant singing while 'the doctor' was ruling.

The legitimation of the folkways of the traditional jamette class by the PNM had to be delicately balanced against the limits of tolerance of the ambitious and upwardly mobile population whose energies had already been harnessed in the direction of self improvement. The middle classes had an educated Eurocentric disdain for everything that Creole culture symbolized (ie. the stereotypes of idleness, corruption, now for now or Carnival mentality of the big spree, illicit habits of every kind, the hand to mouth existence, the ignorance and revivalist character of religious practice, and that always lingering faith in obeah..that link with 'darkest' Africa.) The sober minded middle classes were striving for a long term stable growth period to invest their future in. Their nation would only prosper through *discipline, tolerance and production.*[301]

Williams the politician promoted the multi-cultural ideal of *an equal place for every creed and race* but the 1958 polls had demonstrated that PNM votes were scored in the predominantly Afro-Trinidadian urban areas in Port of Spain. The ethnic profile of PNM candidates was: 15 Afro Trinidadians, 1 Chinese Creole, 6 East Indians (3 Moslem, 2 Hindu, 1 Presbyterian) 1 European and 1 Spanish (mixed) Creole. The majority of the candidates were middle class. Selwyn Ryan (1972) in **Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago** do[illegible] the correlation between ethnic voting behaviour and party allegiance. Williams' appeal to the 'good

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300. Eric Williams **History of the People** 1962 p.282.

citizen' had not completely won the public confidence to concentrate primarily on intelligent issue oriented decision making.

In Trinidad, pride of race flourished and the result was an unhealthy emergence of racialism. The PNM was recognized as an Afro-Trinidadian party where the presentation of members of other 'minority' groups was mainly strategic tokenism. The many voices of this emerging nation were not heard. The Statesman, May 25, 1962, would report that Williams and the PNM..."Whipped racialism to such a pitch that it now threatens to become an inferno consuming everything. The schism between Negroes and other minorities, East Indians in particular, has become a yawning unbridgeable chasm. ... The white heat of anger is spreading."[302]

On the eve of Independence, the Civil Service, the army and the police force were predominantly Afro-Trinidadian. The East Indian community feared a race war with heavy casualties of their number. At the Independence Conference 1962, Rudrunath Capildeo [303]of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and the representative of the Indian National Association (INA) demanded parity with Afro Trinidadians in every aspect of Government. In 1962 the hostilities between Afro-Trinidadians and East Indians were so volatile that many feared a race war. The amendment set in place

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301. 'Discipline, tolerance and production' is the PNM / Nation's motto

302. Quoted in Selwyn Ryan Race And Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago 1972 p.332

303. Capildeo replaced Bahdase Maraj as the Democratic Labour Party leader. He was a young mathematician and lecturer at the University of [illegible]

would be the guidelines written into the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution.

23. Independence 31 August 1962

Independence came 165 years after capitulation by Sir Ralph Abercromby; and so ended Colonial Rule. For his part the Prime Minister worked ceaselessly. Williams was characterized as the smoking insomniac preoccupied with a sense of mission and indefatigable genius. The historian who was now the architect of history. When Independence was achieved in 1962 the PNM published History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago which sold for only $2 (And at that price it was not only making sound political and cultural sense, it was making sound economic sense.) Eric Williams's book concluded with the image of the good mother who prizes all her children equally:

> Together the various groups in Trinidad and Tobago have suffered, together they have aspired, together they have achieved. Only together can they succeed. And only together can they build a society, can they build a nation, can they build a homeland. There can be no *Mother India* for those whose ancestors came from India...There can be no *Mother Africa* for those of African origin, and the Trinidad and Tobago society is a living lie and heading for trouble if it seeks to create the impression or to allow others to act under the delusion that Trinidad and Tobago is an African society. There can be no *Mother England* and no dual loyalties... There can be no *Mother China*, even if one could agree as to which China is the mother; and there can be no *Mother Syria* or no *Mother Lebanon*. A nation like an individual, can have only one Mother. The only Mother we recognize is *Mother Trinidad and Tobago*, and [illegible] discriminate between her children. All

> must be equal in her eyes. And no possible interference can be tolerated by any country outside in our family relations and domestic quarrels, no matter what it has contributed and when to the population that is today the people of Trinidad and Tobago.[304]

Again, this was a giant step forward politically, but most scholars were aware of the fact that their Independence was won when it was no longer politically astute in England to ask tax payers to fund the bureaucracy of an Empire based on Sugar from cane when beet sugar was available more cheaply from Europe. Williams would cynically sum up the economic history of the Independent Trinidad and Tobago by saying that in 1797 Britain had captured an island where Spain reigned but the French ruled; in 1941 British Colonialism was bankrupt as Britain reigned but America ruled - and again the islands were invaded without a single shot. less they were accompanied by wealth or skills needed abroad.

Selwyn Ryan (1972) indicated that Independence had only meant a change of elites. English 'carpet bagger' had been substituted by mimics in the form of 'Afro-Saxon Calibans'.[305] The fundamental economic enterprises of oil and sugar were in no way altered by this change of political responsibility. George Lamming (1966) indicated that Independence in the Caribbean was more to the benefit of England and America than to the Independent nations:

> No change of flag or anthem can stem this spiritual bleeding of men who have nothing to celebrate but a raise in salary...The vocabulary of politics has changed but the politics of their lives remains the

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transfer power.

304. Eric Williams *Ibid* 1962 p.281

same.[306]

24. Black Power Militancy and Labour Unrest

In 1970 another wave of militancy and radicalism was to send repercussions throughout the Caribbean. Black Power consciousness was endorsed by many, especially the urban unemployed. Demonstrations attracted crowds of 20,000 people. Politicians dismissed the movement as essentially irrelevant to the local context, but the people did not respond in a manner that could be interpreted as irrelevant.

When the army was called in to suppress the violence attendant on demonstrations, the forces under Raffik Shah mutinied. Dr. Williams declared a state of emergency to give police the power to arrest and detain suspects without warrants or trial (April 20, 1970). The violence unleashed what Max Weber described as 'diabolical forces lurking in all violence'[307]

> Unfortunately, extremists within the Black Power Movement overplayed their hand and gave the moderates and conservatives the opening they were looking for to destroy the Movement. *The looting, burning, bombing...the raping and indiscipline* which attended some of the marches frightened many Trinidadians...[308]

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[305] Selwyn Ryan. *Ibid* 1972 p.342

[306] quoted in Selwyn Ryan 1972 p.342.

[307] quoted in Ryan *Ibid* 1972 pp.8-9

The message of Black Power had been carried to the base of the socioeconomic pyramid and the response was volatile.[309] Black Power advocates in America like (Trinidad born) Stokely Carmichael saw no future in cultural links between East Indian Creoles and Afro-Creoles in the struggle for political power. In fact, Dr. Rodney saw multi-racial ideals as myths that should be annihilated. Rex Nettleford (1970) felt that multiracialism was a liberal smoke screen in a society where ethnicity was forged into an essentially European (English) cultural mold. A white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethic predominated in a community where the majority of citizens had ancestors from Africa or Asia. 'Power to the People' became a popular slogan among young Afro-West Indians throughout the islands but for Williams the call for power was coming after the long struggle for universal suffrage and Independence under a democratically elected government. The 'minority', in the language of American Black Power advocates, was the highest proportion of the population. In Trinidad it was the East Indian Creoles who were calling for parity in the Black dominated Civil Service.

In the Private Sector discrimination was obvious but an ear-

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308. Selwyn Ryan *Ibid* 1972 p.368.

[309] Dr. Walter Rodney a radical Historian in the Black Power Movement, was banned from Jamaica for connecting the Rastafarians with the philosophies of Black Power. This became a prescription for violence and race war. Rodney died in a bomb explosion in Guyana and his death was interpreted by those who knew Rodney personally as homicide. Forbes Burnham was suspected as being responsible for ordering this 'killing' thus making Rodney a 'martyr' in the eyes of Black Power sympathizers and intellectuals throughout the Caribbean. See Rex Nettleford Mirror Mirror for a considered reflection on the activities and sentiments of

lier commission was aimed at forcing a balance.[310] Where Dr. Williams differed from other Caribbean leaders was that he recognized a need for cultural expressions of African Heritage. And for a while the nation went 'African' in dress, fashion, entertainment, hair design and expression. Ethnic profile elevation was masking pre-existing power relations of economic dependency.[311]

What the Black Power riots brought into sharp relief was that the PNM under Williams had started along the road to racial equality but there had been no substantial change in the material and economic conditions of those at the base of the pyramid. There was little meaningful dialogue between government and the people 'on the Hill' and 'behind the bridge'. The squalor of the urban poor was a disgrace that the government had to address to contain the 'diabolical forces' that lurk in the hearts of those who are hungry and poor.

The rhetoric of black pride did little to promote harmony in the already tense situation where East Indian Creoles (and this was the opposition vote) were acutely sensitive to rumours and

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Walter Rodney's banishment from Jamaica.

[310] The Commission headed by Lloyd Braithwaite Social Stratification in Trinidad (1953) was sparked by an incident where 2 black guests of the Hilton were refused the use of the country club tennis facilities. Derek Walcott also writes a poem about the about race and colour at the Country Club. So what was essentially a political reality had not filtered through as a personal or social reality.

[311] 75-80% of Trinidad's manufacturing industries are foreign owned with tax exemption policies fashioned by the PNM to attract such investment. The sugar industry and the oil industry were under the multinational umbrella with central offices in North America. The Government's aim was to invest in local industries to obtain majority share holdings to control decision making and benefit financially until

signs of racial favouritism in government appointments and policies. Similarly, programs to ease the squalid conditions conditions and placate violence among the urban slum dwellers were seen as discriminating against the rural poor who were predominantly East Indian Creoles.[312] Rural (East Indian) communities lacked basic services like adequate housing, sanitation, piped water, electricity, road maintenance and government policies neglected agriculture.

The rural sector badly needed a comprehensive agricultural policy to compete with developed countries. But the sugar industry was volatile political material as cane farming represented continued dependency on international markets. Sugar was the hallmark of the Colonial plantation economy. Some politicians advocated dismantling the industry in the same way as Cuba had done. In the symbolism of sugar and plantation economies the East Indian Creole featured as the 'cutter of cane'.[313]

The discrepancy between the upper class and lower class incomes was growing further apart under PNM and the cost of National Development was actually undermining women's status and living standards. National Development and Government employment schemes did not include strategies for female involvement. The assumption that men took their salaries home to wives and children so that the benefits of male incomes were enjoyed in the home is not

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industries were Trinidad owned.

[312] In the 1961 elections PNM gained 93.53% of the vote in Laventille and 83.88% in Port of Spain East (Selwyn Ryan *Ibid* 1972 pp.286-87)

sound, even in a society where the normative household consists of two parents and their offspring. In Creole households the nuclear family unit is not the only type. A Government that takes pride in being Creole should not necessarily link male income with domestic improvement.

The State of Emergency signalled an end to liberal government and the beginning of dictatorial government. Williams trusted nobody, centralized everything to an extreme that brought him much criticism. The charisma of the 'university' days was gone. Lloyd Best the leader of Tapia expressed Williams' failure as not linked with skill or fervour but with a failure of the messianic method: "We must discard the conventional politics of exchanging messiahs in the square... of looking for a man with a plan for disciples to follow...on to the Promised Land. ...From the frying pan into the frying pan." Tapia, January 31, 1971[314]

At the 1975 PNM Party Convention, after 17 years of Government Williams complained of 'fed-up-ness' and offered to stand down.[315] "The disease of individualism is more pronounced than ever, and such national movement as there is does not go beyond the increased participation in Carnival and general desire to migrate!" 316

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313. Tate and Lyle (Canada) is 'sugar' in Trinidad and Jamaica.

314. quoted in Ryan Race and Nationalism 1974. See Glenda Simms Michael Manley. PhD Thesis University of Alberta 1985.

315. This was a popular ploy among Trinidad politicians before Independence and Williams was using this to bolster his popularity. See Gordon Lewis The Growth of the Modern West Indies 1968 pp.209-210.

The problems faced by Williams and the PNM were blamed on the usual scapegoats; the legacies of colonial domination and the monopolistic personality of Williams. 'Robber-talk' about getting rough with 'those who do no more than use their positions for intrigue and self-aggrandizement'[317]

25. Decade on Women 1975-1985.

In 1967 member countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean signed the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. This was followed by ratifying the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1979 and acting on the recommendations of the World Plan for Action set in place machinery for implementing policies affecting women. A Women's Affairs Officer was appointed by CARICOM in 1980 to promote an integrated Caribbean program for women of the region.

The Decade for Women was proclaimed by the United Nations in Mexico City 1975 with a thematic focus on *Equality, Development and Peace* then in the mid decade Conference in Copenhagen another set of themes were adopted, *Employment, Health and Education*.
The impact of these initiatives on the Caribbean has been outlined by Joycelin Massiah (1985) as:

> 1. ...placing the situation of women on the agenda of

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316. quoted in Selwyn Cudjoe **The Movement of the People** 1983 p.53.

> the international community and acknowledging the vital presence of women in development processes.
>
> 2. ...providing a new and expanding data base on issues affecting women by challenging conventional concepts, devising innovative data collection techniques and developing creative dissemination programs for effective communication.
> 3. ...new knowledge has been transformed into meaningful policy directives and action programs that have forged the way for women in technical and managerial positions.
> 4. ...Women elevated the art of networking through collaboration among peers across classes, nations and regions for the purpose of sharing experiences, aspirations, resources and support.
> 5. ...Women learnt the necessity of making their voices heard on political events and mobilizing for effective political action.[318]

Various institutions within the Caribbean adopted the guidelines set out by the UN. Joycelin Massiah points to three major programs within the University of the West Indies: the Women and Development Unit (WAND), the Institute of Social , and Economic Research (Women in the Caribbean Project), and training at the Trade Union Institute. The UN specialized offices (ECLA, ILO, and UNDP) offered funding for the regional officer. And the decade ended with the sponsorship of the regional conference 'Caribbean Celebration' which was attended by hundreds of women in Barbados to acknowledge the broad ranging achievements with respect to women. A broad spectrum picture includes the establishment of a Standing Commission of Women in Trinidad (1975), legal reforms in family law; child maintenance, divorce, custody and guardianship[319], and the inclusion of women's activities as

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317. Ryan 1974 *Ibid* pp.440-44

318. Joycelin Massiah. 'The UN Decade for Women: Perspectives from the Commonwealth Caribbean.' Bulletin of Eastern Caribbean Affairs, vol 11,

the Caribbean Festival of the Arts (CARIFESTA). In short the information gathered and the activities associated with the UN program were recorded and tabulated in a way that could flow into the global data stream.

However, the future for women in the after the decade and in a climate of economic recession is seriously in doubt as government 'cut-backs' and a neo-conservative trend dominates the region.

> The proposals for "drastic reductions" in public consumption expenditure...imply severe cutbacks in ..social services. ...For women this holds several implications. First, reductions in government expenditure will mean reductions in employment in the government service..the major employer of female labour in the provision of health, education and social welfare services.. The second implication is that women will be less able to fulfill their responsibility for the health, education and social well-being of their households. In the Caribbean, where between 30% and 50% of households are headed by women this is a crucial implication. Thirdly, as older women lose their jobs, more young girls will be forced to drop out from school either to supplement the household's real income by engaging in productive activity or to act as child minders while their mothers try to eke out a living somehow.[320]

The end of the decade on women has brought an awareness of women's issues but it has only just begun to put together structures and training programs to effect any lasting structural changes in a society dominated by masculinist perspective. The small gains made may be eroded in the current economic climate so

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no 2, 1985 pp.1-9.

319. See Stephanie Daly. The Developing Legal Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago. National Commission the Status of Women. Trinidad and Tobago: Superservice Printing Co. 1982.

320. Joycelin Massiah, 1985 p.8

women, like the oppressed who have struggled to push the margin of liberty and justice towards equality everywhere, have to be eternally vigilant to prevent such recent gains from being swept back as public opinion littered as it is with prejudice has not moved substantially or irrevocably in such a brief time period. As Joycelin Massiah (1985) points out that 'over and above all those specific constraints, there is the overriding constraint of the deeply rooted attitudes which persist in denying that women have any other contribution to make to society but their sexuality and their reproductive ability.'[321]

Coda

> Slaves, the children of slaves, colonials, then pathetic, unpunctual nationalists, what have we to celebrate? First, we have not wholly sunk into our landscapes, as one gets the feeling at funerals that our bodies make only light, unlastting impressions on our earth. It is not an earth that has been fed long with the mulch of cultures, with the cycles of tribalism, feudalism, monarchy, democracy, industrialization. Death, which fastens us to the earth, remains pastoral or brutish, because no single corpse contributes to some tiered concept of a past. Everything is immediate, and this immediacy means overbreeding, illegitimacy, migration without remorse. The sprout stuck casually in the soil. The depth of being rooted is related to the shallowness of racial despair. The migratory West Indian feels rootless on his own earth, chafing at its beaches.[322]

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[321] Joycelin Massiah *Ibid* pp. 8-9

[322] Derek Walcott "What the Twilight Says: An Overture" 1970 p.20

In the New World servitude to the muse of history has produced a literature of recrimination and despair; a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves, or a literature of remorse written by descendants of masters. Because this literature serves as a legacy for historical truth, it collapses into a polemic beyond local discourse or evaporates into a 'nothingness' of pathos unable to carry the burden of so much grief. The truly tough aesthetic, however, neither forgives nor forgets history. However, a simplistic analysis of history resembles myth as opposed to a materialist production of transformations that foreshadowed contemporary society.

This sojourn with the muse of history is not to repeat the story but to discover the story anew. Thus, our perusal of history is not affected by the reactionary cynicism of uncovering 'nothing new under the sun', but recovering that sense of wonder that accompanies refreshment with incidents in the historical memory, a revolution of the spirit that recalls what has been and what it meant to muse. The women East of the Dry River may not know the stuff of history but they have inherited styles of coping that have reached beyond an analysis that falls in on itself.[323]

For Derek Walcott a morbid cynicism entered the muse of history like some lugubrious shroud over the window that opens onto the exuberance and resilience of the West Indian character. This rapture with and longing for the graft with European historiography that records achievements as if civilization was a monument of European genesis has lost sight of a civilization that African people inherit beyond the savage destruction of European underdevelopment of Africa. The wretched slaves were too often passed to some layer of this shallow soil but the schism of cultures did not mean utter destitution or that nothing was created to fill the void.

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[323] See Derek Walcott's "The Muse of History" and "What the Twilight Says: an overture" for the ideas of this sense of history as a tool to a revolutionary consciousness or conscientization.

Unlike the great tradition of white creoles the African creoles nurtured a subterranean culture that gradually incorporated aspects of European symbolic forms. The great tradition of slaves and ex-slaves was from Africa and memories of that heritage. According to Edward Brathwaite (1981) "the psychological problem of the present-day Caribbean is that this crucial and basic African element has been for too long ignored and is still seldom properly recognized."[324] The slaves were anonymous to most Europeans and were thought to have no culture beyond that broad spectrum sometimes labelled 'ignorance' or 'superstition'. But to understand the legacies of a preliterate / oral, preindustrial African culture is to go beyond the critical European standpoint. To connect with this theocentric tradition is to appreciate that every aspect of life has a religious reference and meaning. The separation of the 'sacred' and the 'secular' has been crafted elsewhere. Similarly the culture is not externalized in monuments to render for posterity all those 'artifacts of

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324. Edward Kamau Brathwaite Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica Port-of-Spain: New Beacon Books 1974, 1981 p.7

civilization' that so many search for among ruins. For the African the dance and the oral tradition was immanent in the transfer of history. And under the guise of the dance slave religious expression survived and a parallel (fragmented) culture was maintained.

The stuff of history that interests the psychologist is that based on material achievements and the dialogue with Caribbean identity that has to reach beyond the graft as well as acknowledge this colossal series of adjustments and change after the rupture of enslavement. The reality of reconciling history and reality with intellectual images, popular perceptions and shared values never ends. However, this research tells a story beyond despair and if the historiographer searches in the contours of emancipatory acts then it is here that another story emerges and women share this aspect of struggle from slave to free citizen; an astounding catalogue of metamorphoses from chattel stolen from the African continent to Creole citizenship in the contemporary Caribbean.

CHAPTER 2

POOR BLACK WOMEN IN IDENTITY THEORIZING

> '...Ah say is a damn hard life an' yu can't deny dat. Ah say ah wan' fe leave de stinkin' dirty place. Yu t'ink dat ah wan' to be like yu and' live me whole life in dis rass place? Yu t'ink ah wan' to be not'in else but a whorin' crow bait?'
>
> 'Listen, Dinah, ah not tryin' fe discourage you but yu t'ink ah didn' try to? Yu t'ink is one or two time ah did leave dis place an' did 'ave to come back. An' why? 'Cause ah had was to come back. When Massa God mek yu an' put yu in ya 'im mean dat is right here yu goin' stay.
>
> I 'member when dis place was a swamp, Dinah, dat time me body an' ah could still catch de fattes' Yankee sailorman 'pon Hanover Street.
>
> Orlando Patterson[325]

> 'Who was talking about a perfect day? That's a woman's reaction. But all right Jane. You've dropped out'. Roche said,'That doesn't mean that her expectations aren't great'.
>
> 'It means they are very vague. And the whole point of the exercise is that you've got not to be vague. I didn't want to say this before, but this isn't a game that women can play. Their expectations have to do with somebody else. Like that perfect day we were talking about. A woman can't visualize too well because she has too many possibilities. She can be anything. Anything can happen to her. But it's out of her hands. It all depends on this man who's going to find her. That's a terrible thing, if you think about it. I often think that if I were a woman I would be very frightened.'
>
> V.S. Naipaul[326]

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[325] H. Orlando Patterson. Children of Sisyphus.1974 pp.38-39.

[326] V.S. Naipaul. Guerrillas. 1975 pp.147-148)

This theme of female identity, noted here in excerpts from West Indian novels, is not new to psychology as noted scholars have described the nature of women in what Noami Weisstein (1968) described in 'Psychology Constructs the female, or the Fantasy Life of the Male Psychologiest', as offering 'certainty' where the riddles of intrinsic nature have been cracked by an impeccable science:

> Erik Erikson ..(1964), upon noting that young women often ask whether they can "have an identity before they know whom they will marry, and for whom they will make a home," explains somewhat elegiacally that "Much of a young women's identity is already defined in her kind of attractiveness and in the selectivity of her search for the man (or men) by whom she wishes to be sought...." Mature womanly fulfillment..rests on the fact that a woman's..."somatic design harbors an 'inner space' destined to bear the offspring of chosen men, and with it, a biological, psychological, and ethical commitment to care of human infancy!"...Joseph Rheingold (1964), a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School,"..anatomy decrees the life of a woman.. when women grow up without dread of their biological functions and without subversion by feminist doctrine, and therefore enter upon motherhood with a sense of fulfillment and altruistic sentiment, we shall attain the goal of a good life and a secure world in which to live it."[327]

According to feminist psychologists, psychology has very little to say about female identity that is actually grounded in the experiences of women. Her biology supersedes the cultural nexus of power relations and the dynamics of ideology in the transformation of social status and meanings associated with being female. Psychology has assumed that the central aspect of identity and the human personality is fixed by an inner biological dynamic that overdetermines the social context or the forces of history.

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[327] Naomi Weisstein. 'Psychology Constructs the Female, or the Fantasy Life of the Male Psychologist' (1968) in Michele Hoffnung Garskof (ed) Roles Women Play: Readings Toward Women's Liberation 1971.

Black Women as 'Other'

Black women in a culture dimensioned along conventional North American or European lines, find constructions of themselves in this dominant ideology as variants from the norm. The dominant ideology of the culture exercising hegemonic influence legitimates and reaffirms white middle class patriarchal institutions and values. The Black woman experiences herself as 'other', being always outside the discourse that accommodates success and advancement in a reality that is experienced as parallel to or in conflict with existing codes of conduct or life style patterns. Black scholars assert that the lived experience that shapes consciousness is relative to access of and fidelity to affirming values. However, like the 'other', she is outside the boundaries of formal convention and ideological imperatives. The Black woman negotiates her way through a maze of colour, class and gender.[328]

> What particularly signalizes the situation of women is that she - a free and autonomous being like all human creatures - nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the

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[328] See Introduction to Joyce Ladner's Tomorrow's Tomorrow 1970; and Debrah Lewis and Gloria Joseph's Common Differences 1973.

> *Other*. They propose to stabilize her as an object and doom her to *immanence* since her *transcendence* is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego) - who always regards the self as essential - and the compulsion of the situation in which she is the inessential.[329]

Cultural Construction of Identity

The concepts of class, sex/gender and race/ethnic identity have been compellingly reintroduced in contemporary psychology to take up the challenges of emancipatory struggles and the strategy of constructing a counter hegemonic claim to challenge conventional wisdom and a conservative social science modelled on a reductionist biology.[330] Feminists and Black scholars have pointed out that the social sciences have largely excluded their kind from domains of experience in the production of images and symbols that make up our epistemology. 'The circle of men whose writing and talk was significant to each other extends backward in time as far as our records reach. What men were doing was relevant to men, was written by men about men for men. Men listened to and listen to what one another said.'[331] In other words, a peculiar eclipsing of definitions of human experience was fashioned by a privileged white male intelligentsia.

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[329] *Women as "Other"*: Simone de Beauvoir The Second Sex 1953 p.xxix

[330] The basic assumptions of this model of science: that science is objective (as opposed to subjective in the dualism of one-dimensional strands of polar opposites constructed in the method by the limits of a mathematical language in the service of logical positivism and the quest for an affectless language as a tool of research). *Science is a collection of pure and objective facts, a reified thing in and of itself. *Scientific truths are pure and reliable as they are conducted without intrusion of prejudice or bias; the personal and the political are anathema to science. See Kathy Overfield. 'Dirty Fingers, Grime and Slag Heaps: Purity and the Scientific Ethic' pp.237-247 in Dale Spender Men's Studies Modified: The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines 1981

Contributions to contemporary psychology by those scholars whose interests belong to concepts of self within the semiotic context of symbolic interaction, social constructions of cultural reality and the mirrors of a reflected identity or 'self', have inserted relativity in the 'natural' ordering of social entities. Thus, the existential dilemma of *who am I* is continually rediscovered socio-genetically. The mirrors of the self are there in *being-engaged* in the world and either accepting or resisting hegemonic claims of stereotypes for member categories. The question that must be addressed is not whether some biological proclivities are more salient in women, but who defines the mainstream and the valuing of one people as universal subjects while others are considered exotic or peripheral, and the meanings of variations from norms as adjustments to circumstantial data of experience or pathological symptoms of nosology. The neutrality of science and psychology is like the neutrality of language itself. It is inextricably tied to knowledge categories that had their genesis within social, political and historical contexts rather than an ethereal separate value-free and judgment neutral domain.[332]

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[331] Dorothy Smith 'A Peculiar Eclipsing: Women's exclusion from man's culture' in Women's Studies International Quarterly Vol 1, No 4, 1978 pp.281-296

Contemporary social psychology is almost exclusively the domain of a particular society, which is not to diminish the contributions to knowledge by the 90% to 95% of social psychologists in the world who are funded from within the United States.[333] However, as John Berry (1983) pointed out, no psychologist can escape membership in society and so it is essential to hold this up for scrutiny when transporting ideas. John Berry suggests that the discipline resists the drive towards 'societal' psychologies even though societal social psychologies or parochial psychologies are more likely to reflect with accuracy the characteristics pertinent to issues of content, theories and methods (as these are interconnected).

Pioneers in the Field of Identity and Self Concept

The pioneering works of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)[334] , Carl

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[332] See Sandra Harding and Merill Hintikka (eds) Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science 1983; Paula Giddings When and Where I Enter...: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America New York: William Morrow 1985

[333] See Moscovici (1972) in John Berry, 'The Sociogenesis of Social Science: An Analysis of the Cultural Relativity of Social Psychology', 1983 p.449

[334] The Interpretation of Dreams - dreams serve to release emotional tensions, tensions disruptive to perfect rest, or wish fulfillment. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis and An Outline of Psychoanalysis. Trinity of consciousness - *id, ego and superego*. William Sahakian History and Systems of Psychology 1975 pp.248-260.

Jung (1875-1961)[335] , Alfred Adler (1870-1937)[336] , Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949)[337] , George Herbert Mead (1863-1931)[338] , William James (1842-1910)[339] , Vygotsky (1896-1934) and many others have profoundly influenced contemporary scholars. The legacies of scholarship in the spheres of identity formation are acknowledged with the respect due to the work. Both William James and George Herbert Mead located individual identity in the social matrix of human conduct. Thus identity is linked to reputation in a communication network where the reflexive character of the self belongs. James stressed the importance of self-esteem in the maintenance of the social self, especially the pretension between aspirations and success. "I" the knower is fundamental to identity and like identity itself "I" is grasped only momentarily and just as quickly becomes illusion as the "me's" vanish into the past.[340]

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[335] The collective and personal unconscious and its archetypes; theory of personality with concepts of self, ego, persona, individuation process, and mandala; psychological types and functions; theory of psychic energy and libido; and a new approach to dreams and analysis. William Sahakian *Ibid* 1975 pp.260-264.

[336] Alfred Adler Individual Psychology (trans 1925); Understanding Human Nature (trans 1927)

[337] Interpersonal processes possible as personality comports with the experience of a "relatively enduring pattern of recurrent interpersonal situations which characterize a human life"; dynamism of the self-system where homeostasis and equillibrium, disequillibrium modulated by education and pursuit of satisfaction (from basic needs to social/personal needs). William Sahakian *Ibid* 1975 pp.273-274.

[338] Psychology of the Act "the unit of existence is the act"; consciousness emergent; gesture - the beginning of social act; *generalized other* in role assumption and conduct of the self; distinction between *'I'* and *'me'* - *I* never existed as an object of consciousness, whereas the "self-conscious, actual self in social intercourse is the objective *me* or *me's* with the process of response continually going on and implying a fictitious *I* always out of sight of self.. inner consciousness is socially organized by the importation of the social organization of the outer world..generalized other." Mead is the psychologist of the social individual par excellence. William Sahakian History and Systems of Psychology 1975 pp.360-364

[339] "The knower as actor"; "Mental interests, hypotheses, postulates, so far as they are bases for human action help to *make* the truth which they declare"; "Mental life is primarily teleological; that is to say, that our various ways of feeling and thinking have grown to be what they are because of their utility in shaping our *reactions* on the outer world"; the criterion of mentality is the "pursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment"; "stream of consciousness"; "theory of the self - distinguishing between *me* and *I* - the self as known, or the *me*, the 'empirical ego' and the self as knower, or the *I*, the 'pure ego'"; self as social, material, spiritual and pure ego. From William Sahakian History and Systems of Psychology 1975 pp.294-296.

Vygotsky (1896-1934) is credited with directing full attention to the constructive effects of socio-cultural factors in Soviet Psychology. The basic premise here is that psychological processes (including consciousness of self and identity formation) emerge through historical and social evolutions that originate from human productive effort. This idea was further developed by such noted scholars as Leontiev and Luria. The synthesis of Vygotsky's cultural-sociological emphasis and Pavlov's first and second signal system theory has elaborated a system of psychology proposed by Rubinstein: double interaction / dialectical psychology which attempts a reformulation of the Cartesian mind-body dualism by emphasizing the relational (text/context/meaning) in the unity of consciousness and human conduct. Structure and function develop holistically or organismically. Payne (1968) "The relation of the psychic to the material world is fundamentally

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340. See William James's "The Social Self" pp.163-168. and George Herbert Mead's "Self as Social Object" pp.175-178. in Stone and Farberman (Eds) Social Psychology Through Symbolic Interaction 1970, 1981.

two-fold: to the inner matter of the brain (this relation constitutes the psychic in the quality of higher nervous activity) and to the outer matter of the external world in which relationship the psychic takes on the quality of ideal and subjective. The first quality Rubinstein calls the *ontological* (or theory-of-being) aspect of the psychic; the second he calls *epistemological* (or theory-of-knowledge) aspect."[341] For Luria and Vygotsky the psychological processes are mediated through social processes and thus the mental life of individuals emerges in social interaction. Thus during the course of human historical development there is a qualitative shift that conditions human thought and perception, and still further, translates into theories and meanings for individual lives.[342]

Alfred Adler (1870-1937) based his Individual Psychology on five basic tenets: fictional finalism, strivings for superiority, compensation for inferiority, human beings as primarily social beings or beings-in-relation to others, the self as a constructed entity and the style of life within the society. These terms echo through the social and conceptual structures on estimates of class, race/ethnicity and sex/gender as the creative component gives the individual agency and self expression. For Adler the pan-sexualism of Freud was displaced by human cultural realities. He abandoned trait ridden *types* to favour a creative / created *self* and *life style* emergent in the struggle to overcome this tension between inferiority and superiority.

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[341] p.98 Quoted (from Rubinstein) in Klaus Riegel Foundations of Dialectical Psychology 1979 p.31

[342] See William Sahakian History and Systems of Psychology for more information on The Dialectical Era of Russian Psychology - dialectical materialism (Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1896-1934), Alexander R. Luria (1902-1982), Aleksei Leontiev (1903-), Sergey Leonidovich Rubinstein (1889-1960) : Formation of Pspyche as Activity) pp.399-409

Inserting the challenge of cultural reality by Adler started the wave of another trinity, Ruth Benedict (1887-1948)[343], Margaret Mead (1901-78)[344] and Karen Horney (1885-1948).[345] The grounding of explanations of human conduct within cultural traditions both exposed and reduced the stature of Freud's psychoanalytic theories by identifying a chauvinism in the anatomy of its constructs. Freud's ethnocentrism and phallocentrism threw him into such explanations in his theory of female sexuality as 'penis envy' and a leitmotif of 'anatomy is destiny', which could be understood within cultural and social constructs as opposed to libidinal forces in human biogenesis. Thus patriarchal modes of human conduct would explain the centrality of phallocentric psychoanalytic psychology and the peripheral thesis of feminine psychology as a variant from this masculine norm.[346] However, it would an injustice to the genius of Freud to omit his own search for meanings surrounding his quest for what is essentially feminine. He would reflect:

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343. Ruth Benedict Patterns of Culture 1934

344. Margaret Mead Male and Female 1949

345. Karen Horney The Neurotic Personality of Our Time 1937 and New Ways in Psychoanalysis 1939.

346. See William Sahakian *Ibid* 1975 pp.270-272.

> "That is all I had to say to you about femininity. It is certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly....if you want to know more about femininity, inquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information."[347]

In a similar vein Freud would write:

> "And now you are already prepared to hear that psychology too is unable to solve the riddle of femininity ... In conformity with its peculiar nature, psycho-analysis does not try to describe what a woman is - that would be a task it could scarcely perform - but sets about inquiring how she came into being, how a woman develops out of a child with a biosexual disposition."[348]

Ruth Benedict asserted that there was no proper antagonism between the individual and the society as propounded by nineteenth century dualism and contemporary science. Anthropological theory does not separate the individual and society into entities as no individual can begin to express himself or herself without participating in cultural constructs or the decrees of civilization. However, no civilization yet observed has been able to eradicate human differences in the temperaments of its individual subjects. In fact the rapport is so close that Benedict believes cultural patterns are not usually considered without the relationship to individual psychology. For example, the abnormal character is usually disoriented from congenial conduct supported by norms and

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347. Quoted in Juliet Mitchell Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women 1974 p.119

348. From "Femininity" 1933, quoted in J. Williams Psychology of Women: Behavior in a Biosocial Context 1974 p.17

institutions supporting their civilization. The matrix of culture provides the raw materials for fashioning life styles. Thus, every private interest is served by or offset against the traditional stores of his or her civilization and achievement gauged according to the cultural milieu.[349]

Erik Erikson (1902-)[350] locating the dynamic of human development within the social context (ontogony) has influenced our understanding of human identity formation by giving the name 'identity' to an essential theme in the conception of 'self' in Western affluent cultural contexts. Identity questions pose dilemmas for modern adolescents negotiating the stormy waters between the shores of childhood and adulthood (with many a ship wreck in between).[351]

The psychoanalytic school sees identity as being linked to individual libidinal attachments in human social arrangements. Certain ordered processes significantly influence this discovery of self. Erikson's work mapped the life course from a social psychological and psychogenetic development to show how the discovery of self was a weaving of developmental threads in the matrix of society accorded to human maturation.[352] Erikson linked the individual's development with stage theories corresponding to age and social preoccupations for self definition. In a schooled social domain of middle class childhood and adolescence the orderliness of Erikson's concepts of human development seem as neatly packaged as the age and grade and graduation processes. Adult development did not undergo the same orderliness of inherit the records of scientific scrutiny as that expended on the child, especially the child under 6 years of age.

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[349] See Ruth Benedict *Ibid* 1934 pp.232-234.

[350] Erik Erikson Childhood and Society 1950, The Eight Stages of Man 1962, Identity: Youth and Crisis 1968

[351] The term 'adolescence' was introduced to Psychology by G. Stanley Hall (1904)

[352] The psycho-historical studies of Gandi and Luther show this remarkable fashioning of influences in producing extraordinary individuals in the context of their times.

In contemporary affluent societies, psychologists are having to appreciate the challenges of social flexibility as age and gender appropriate conduct patterns have been radically challenged by those who have felt straight-jacketed by the rigid definitions that thwart their freedom. Resistance to these conservative hegemonic cultural prescriptions is bringing new modes of conduct to individual lives and inserting ambiguity and conflict to the orderly, reified, routinized ways of being defined. It is within the wheel of challenge / ambiguity / resistance / conflict that socio-genetic opportunities emerge for identity redefinition and attitude change in society. Thus, contemporary research is uncovering all manner of *relativity* in time honoured *nature*.

Individualism and Self Actualization

Uncharted waters are being navigated in an age where frontiers of personal achievements are being propelled by a new legitimating concept: *self actualization.* Themes associated with lines of opening up the system to emancipate a spirit of self creative endeavours and human potential for growth and personal fulfillment have made their entrance to models of psychology that endorse a constructivist dynamic approach. This heady challenge is not unbridled or unstructured but there is a new legitimating series of claims on the person to achieve through a primacy of work / self worth. The caste like qualities that shaped life contours and moulded individual identity have undergone a transforming shift in response to the positing of ambiguity in the laws of 'nature'.

Transformations of historically *closed* systems of communicated assumptions in the ritualized passage through ages and stages have been *opened* by emerging concepts for self definition in an ambiance foreshadowed by the crowning peak of Abraham Maslow's pyramid: *self actualization.*[353]

Marronage in Psychology

This contemporary composition of ethics transcends traditional meanings and judgments. (1980)[354] Each person is *thrown* into a world that is *problematic* or becomes problematic as the challenge to tradition actually blurs the genres and allows for the resulting diffusion to be grasped and exploited by those pushing at the boundaries of socio-cultural definition. The semiotic realm is permeated with new ambivalence and new meanings for old words to signify the transforming quality / genesis of our language as vitally linked with social *marronage*.[355]

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[353] Abraham Maslow. Toward A Psychology of Being 1962 and Motivation and Personality 1969

[354] Ann Swidler. 'Love and Adulthood in American Culture' in Themes of Love and Work in Adulthood 1980 pp.120-150.

Demographic, ethnographic and socio-political developments have had powerful influences on interpretative frameworks. Contemporary psychology has incorporated the shifts in this semiotic milieu embedded in shifting social sands. Giving primacy to the semiotic means locating identity formation within the genetic material context of social acts. In other words *psychogenesis is not reducible to biogenesis* - although it would seem ludicrous to dismiss the importance of organismic somatic variations in identity formation. We are witnessing an age where marronage (especially among the elderly, and politically and socially disadvantaged groups) is assigning new meanings to ages and stages and setting the neat correlations adrift.

Neil Smelser and Erik Erikson (1980) have pointed to some fascinating research in the area of adulthood.[356] We keep hearing about adulthood as universal concept, when it is plain to read that this *adulthood* is definitely created out of a contemporary United States social context. This adulthood is *parochial* although the term *'adulthood'* is part of our gift for creating

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[355] 'Marronage' is a word evolved from slave resistance through running away to make an independent life under the cover of the mountains and forests of Jamaica. In contemporary Caribbean thought it means an ambiguous assertion of separateness in the face of overbearing structures or dependency. See Edward Braithwaite 1974, p.62

[356] Neil Smelser and Erik Erikson (eds) Work and Love 1980

universalese as the sampling of adult experience that informed this understanding of 'adulthood' crossed no national borders or bodies of ocean, and it did not tamper with the confounding dilemmas of cultures, gender and variants on the theme of class membership.

Changing society is having a differential impact on our awareness of the 'who am I' and 'who are they' and 'what is this that we are all called' and 'who does s/he say that s/he is?' The repercussions obviate the need for serious reconsideration within psychological theories from methodology through to conceptualization. And the impetus could surely be located from within the nagging criticisms and counter claims for continuous renewal; not grounded in some psycho-sexual or biological universal standpoint.

Our theories of human development, especially *adult* development must be examined in light of persistent monolithic categories that are comfortable tools in the schools for *experts* who do not re-examine their knowledge against the real as experienced. It is embarrassing to find that much of the research in the field is shadowed by a cloud of limited sampling of vast populations. Indeed, we have theories of adult development that should really be titled 'adult male development of my friends in Suburb, U.S.' or 'moral judgments of Harvard undergraduates who applied to take my interview for experiment credits in Psychology I, month, year'. The over-reliance on sampling from college classrooms using pencil and paper survey techniques needs to be re-examined in terms of its usefulness to the discipline.

Feminist scholars have begun the task of re-evaluating theories of *human* development constructed from the limited perspective of masculine gender value constructs, student population samples and inherent biases that systematically distort interpretations of female experience.[357] Some women have chosen themselves as representative of a semiotic cultural realm to create a hegemonic claim / counter claim. There is nothing new in this under the sun, but the material or dialectic incubus is set in motion for a tumble forward and an emergence from closed systems of identity / stereotypes / archetypes. Gender strategic social acts might be paralleled with ethnic strategic social acts such as the assertion of pluralism / ethnic profiling / ethnic language preservation. All those things that lock out concepts of the legitimate other or transcendent qualities of being. Relativity does not reside in a duality of superiority-inferiority or preservation of a *status quo*. The separate but equal, the different but equal, the assertion of power equality is part of an historical theme of 'divide and rule' turned upside down. (First you create a sense of guilt in the hearts of the privileged so that stepping aside allows the 'other' to step through the gaps to share in the privilege. And contemporary female identity is very similar to any other process of embourgeiosment).

There are distinctions between models of ethnicity and gender that basically affirm the existing hierarchy and those values of success and power; and models that wish to re-evaluate definitions of gender and ethnicity to empower difference and the somatic schemas of both individual and cultural definition. In this first model the feminist makes the assertion of sameness between genders and ethnic variants are masked by a similar cultural unity. Thus the feminist work ethic of adopting conventional attributes of masculine success and the Afro-Saxon who speaks without the 'impediment' of Creolized forms. In the second model a more radical proposal seeks to incorporate variants and validate difference. The semiotic challenge is forced to address our being-embodied as opposed to an ideological argument that has already been launched above the ground of our actual presentation in everyday reality. Thus the politics of difference can only be courted after the achievements of the politics of being the 'same' have gone through. or vice-versa; what is important is the strategy for emancipation at an set of circumstances in time.

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[357] I use 'feminist' because in the term there is an assertion / challenge.

Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (1982) has been widely acclaimed as one of the 'voices' calling for a review of the contrapuntal themes of human development theory. Gilligan recognized the problem as a lack of female franchise in the discussions about *human* development and identity formation. Her aim was to expand our understanding of what it means to include *women's* experiences for generating theories.

Theory construction has cast different images of being-human by setting *horizons* beyond the focus of investigation. Ann Swidler (1980) Janet Giele (1980) and Marjorie Fiske (1980) have inserted contradictions into the contemporary models by including people from different age groups, different class affiliations, different gender assignments and different ethnic backgrounds; from unrewarding repetitive work situations and different towns / suburbs in the United States.[358] When these issues were addressed the theories collapsed as static meaning assigning structures. The theories of adult human development were drawn from a limited sampling of adults and so they did not cover their mandate.

It is important to take stock of contributions to our understanding of *human* development. The knowledge that we have must be examined in light of its limitations and the parochial aspects must be accepted as such. Is it not arrogant to take a sample of 40 adult males from middle-upper America and construct an elaborate model of *adulthood* as Daniel Levinson (1978) had done. The absence of women is disturbing, but it is also important to realize that the research did not include many other categories that would be important to any *universal* concept of adulthood. The research gives us valuable information about middle class American men from several suburbs and it might be shown to link with research on men in similar occupations, family configurations, socioeconomic backgrounds and so on. There is, however, everything wrong with making claims beyond the context of the field investigated unless the *meta-theory* is based on grounded theories.

Janet Giele (1980) based her research on the idea that history is central to any understanding of identity and human development: 'The life course of any generation interacting with history will be unique (and) in a complex society the resources available to each party for exchange will differ.'[359]

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[358] See articles in Neil Smelser and Erik Erikson (eds) Work and Love 1980.

The location of the individual may be critical in any articulation of identity linked constructs. Ann Swidler's work on the courtly love tradition and the modern concepts of love including *love of self* and *self actualization* gives us some indication that history and ethnography are very important. The courtly love tradition has had little relevance to identity formation among the women who were emancipated daughters of slave mothers in the United States (and all their mothers ever since). The concept of actualization is also not in the construct of self in many lower class ethnic minority women.

The research conducted by Marjorie Fiske (1980) indicated that the poor developed in less distinct stages than their middle class counterparts. Such notions as generativity and happiness were seen to be linked with the ability to furnish the criteria that brought comfort and recognition. Thus, satisfaction was not guaranteed among the poorer income categories. However, the poor were not excluded from popular media image prescriptions for their lives. Integration of expectations expressed in these popular accessible forms are constantly at variance with the realities of lower levels of acquisitive economic powers, differently styled conduct, routines and expressions of temperament. Poor people measure their inability to acquire 'normal' houses and lifestyles and register *themselves* as failures, as unhappy and as deviant against the other code. Acquisition is surely a central theme in contemporary identity.[360]

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[359] Janet Giele 1980 pp.158-9

Socio-Genetic Psychology

Any conception of the self or identity cannot be abstracted from traits, genotypes and age criterion without locating human conduct within a symbolic interaction of belonging to a community that impresses its intersubjective values on members. It is absurd to strip notions of identity from the socio-cultural context as it is from within this representational array that the person comes to grasp any sense of self or knowledge of his or her own reputation. People have many selves and others recognize us, communicate with us and assume a certain relationship with us that makes sense given the context. One's sex, race and age may be difficult to alter but the concept of what it means to be female, negroid and 60 years old (say) is not static or everywhere the same. What individuals do with concepts of themselves in the context of everyday communion with others is a challenge. For William James the reflexive character of the "I" and "me" sets the stage for evolving transformations of the self and one's reputation. Similarly, what is "me" and what can be "mine" can be challenged, but the material context of possessions, arrangements of power and ideological imperatives are rude reminders of the obstacles in the path of the creative imagination in fashioning one's own identity. History cannot be siphoned off existing symbolic structures and social organization. Thus a shadow is cast on the present and the future possibilities for authentic dialogue between social values, human conduct and notions of identity.[361]

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[360] Joyce Ladner Tomorrow's Tomorrow (1971) has adolescent black girls talking about shameless shop lifting to make a powerful image of *just as good*. Gordon Lewis (1983) called for research on the new generation of Caribbean youth who had grown up on American television and *universal* education. I will look for themes of consumption and self appraisal in the interviews for different age groups.

There are distinctions between models of class, race/ethnicity and sex/gender that disturb the existing set of power relations and those that actually maintain the *status quo*. In the assertions of being the same or having parity in the work place, for example, a liberal trend may change the compositions of class, sex and race backgrounds in the work force without essentially altering the system at work. Thus the thesis of the liberal redefinition of social relations is set into action and then turns to maintain these relations.[362] The feminist work ethic of adopting conventional attributes of masculine success and the 'Afro-Saxon' who speaks without the 'impediment' of Creole forms betraying a lower-class tongue. In the second model of 'being-different' a more radical agenda is called into play. This proposal seeks to incorporate variants and validate difference. And the semiotic challenge is forced to address not only the dominant ideology and cultural hegemony but our 'being-embodied' and grounded in a peculiar set of relations that need a language of their own to link into the universe of discourse. While the challenge is launched in ideology beyond the grasp of individual worlds and embodied experiencing of reality the guises and pretenses can mask difference for class benefit and maintenance of an existing social order.

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[361] Jurgen Habermas: self production is mediated through symbolic interaction (language, expressive gestures). Language makes it possible for an individual to assert needs and desires that are antagonistic to all manners and appropriateness. Language and work makes it possible for the individual to appropriate her or his world through *praxis*. see Martin Jay The Dialectical Imagination "The Genesis of Critical Theory" pp.41-85.
For Jacques Lacan: the unconscious is "the discourse of the other"..Ideologically alienated *moi* or "me". This was worked from the bases given in Heidegger's Being and Time which moved from a phenomenological hermeneutic of human being toward a fundamental ontology of Being. The unity of being-in-the-world has its heritage in Husserl's conception of consciousness as intentionality. All consciousness is consciousness of something.

[362] See Eisenstein's The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism and Franz

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Fanon's Black Skin White Masks for variations on this theme that emphasizes class and cultural hegemony over marginalism to types and maintenance of traditional ethnic conduct that could not be separated from the culture of the lower class.

CHAPTER 3

ETHNOGRAPHY AND DIALECTICS IN MAKING WOMEN PROBLEMATIC

> While the contextual grounding of the meanings of human action and language is vital to our everyday understanding of our own and other's behavior, the importance of context has been largely ignored by traditional research approaches in the social and behavioral sciences. ... The positivist model, which has dominated these disciplines, has led to a search for universal context-free laws and to the use of context stripping methods. Investigators in developmental and social psychology have increasingly begun to note the inadequacies of this approach...
>
> Elliot Mishler[363]

Uncovering the Phenomenological World Ethnographically

The need to learn about the cultural matrix of the women we are studying is made obvious when those we are coming to know more about reside in another society. We are in a similar position as Alfred Schutz's stranger. For entering another culture means that the 'taken for granted' knowledge about our own society becomes unreliable or patently false in the context of another set of relations, beliefs and values. Areas of ignorance that may have been inconsequential now become poignant for the stranger's survival in this new environment. However, in this process of uncovering the how to participate in the new social context the stranger gradually acquires an understanding that is potentially valuable in articulating events and characteristics of this 'new' civilization. Schutz indicated that as the members of the host society live 'inside' the culture, they are unable to scrutinize anything but a reflection of 'how the world is'. They are not conscious of fundamental assumptions and visions that are shaped by the culture in constructing reality.[364]

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[363] Elliot Mishler, 'Meaning in Context: Is There Any Other Kind?' 1979 p.1)

According to social construction theories reality is relative. Kurt Lewin's Field Theory and Social Science proposed that reality for an individual is predominantly an intersubjective reality, a world composed of ascriptions based on social consensus. Reality is not absolute and differs according to the group to which an individual belongs.[365] In order to uncover the *world-as-lived* for women in the Beetham and John John area of East Port of Spain, the researcher must enter into and have access to the discourse that informs and reifies social styles of coping and identity formation in local community life. Setting aside preconceived notions or *bracketing out* our ethnocentric standpoint, is part of coming to know another socio-cultural landscape as well as coming to know its residents.

Familiarity with lifeways and everyday speech acts, public rituals of acknowledgment and leave-taking, and so on, must recede from the foreground into the background of experience as the shape and contours of symbolic acts are illuminated and grasped in mundane performance. It is important to acknowledge that discoursing cannot be torn from the context. According to Jurgens Habermas communicative action presumes the engagement of experienced participants in actions that are constituted and thus, understood.[366] This is the contextual arrangement for an *ethnography;* distilling the everyday acts that emerge in human *discoursing*. Systematic interest in speech acts draws on the assumption that language is not everywhere equivalent but has an internal consistency. Dell Hymes (1968) and John Gumperz (1964) employed "ethnography of communication" as means towards theory construction coming from within cultural organization.[367]

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[364] See Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson. Ethnography: Principles in Practice 1983 pp.7-8.

[365] See Kurt Lewin. Field Theory and Social Science 1948 p.54.

According to Dorothy Smith (1981) by making the experienced world *problematic* a moment is *grasped* in the context of the experienced world of our women subjects. This deliberate act of becoming conscious of women's social experiences is prior to any articulation with independent meta-analytic structures. Reverence for women's own discourse is thus prior to any shift in relevance or eschewing of context. The inquiry *illuminates women's parochial communicative acts*. Thus the ethnographer *engages* in the *act of coming to know* women as agentic-subjects, active, alert and in synchrony with patterns that connect in *their* own milieu. Women themselves, provide the *metaphors* that interpret their own world of discourse. In this method, the women become the *intelligentsia*[368] of their parochial realm. Their strategies of coping and ascriptions for identity come from within the local power arrangements and they are affirmed in and through their internal assigning of meanings. Knowing their world is fused with knowing themselves for it is in this context that experience is shaped and comprehended intersubjectively.

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[366] Jurgens Habermas Communication and the Evolution of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, Boston: Beacon Press, 1979, pp.24-5.

[367] See Roger Abrahams and Richard Bauman in Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture. pp.88-89.

By concentrating on women as agentic subjects we endeavour to locate our acts of coming-to-know within the *historical processes* of *individual and social development*. Consciously stripping ourselves of parochial attitudes is integral to allowing ourselves to be open to and receptive within another's parochial standpoint. Individuals are embedded in the dynamics of their own local community as the context for locating ascriptive categories of meanings in their particular dialect or colloquial speech. The ethnographer does not develop cultural amnesia but adopts an attitude of being open to 'others' while attempting to to understand from within this constituting realm through participative action, astute observation and learning to read situations accurately.[369]

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[368] 368. Dorothy Smith "Women's Inequality and the Family" (unpublished manuscript, September 1979) As intellectuals we begin ordinarily *outside* experienced actuality and *in* the discourse - the conversation-in-texts going forward among an intelligentsia. p.2.

[369] 369. V.S. Naipaul has an English woman coming to the Caribbean and this sketch illustrates the egocentrism of the traveller as opposed to the person who is 'at home' in another culture: " She was among people who didn't have a world view and a world view was what she had expected, once *she* had left England. She was among colonialists who were inter-

According to Gregory Bateson's Steps to an Ecology of Mind (1972) this learning about how others know is a key into the *parochial and universal* ranges of *human experiencing*. Temporal, olfactory and visceral adjustments are essential to any grounding of experience that *feels through* an atmosphere or *ambiance*. This linking with what it means to be human, or in this what it means to be female in East Port of Spain, involves getting beyond *being alien* or experiencing *anomie* in this world that is authored by another culture, another history and a whole other set of intersubjective signifying relations.

Social and material realities are embedded in the routinely affirmed intersubjective world of everyday life. George Herbert Mead (1964) emphasized that meaning is fused with processes incorporated in mundane experience:

> The social environment is endowed with meaning in terms of the process of social activity. It is an organization of objective relations which arise in relation to a group engaged in such activities and processes of social experience and behavior. Certain characteristics of the external world are possessed by, only with reference to, or in relation to an interacting social group of individual organisms.[370]

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ested only in their own situation and their own politicians, whose names she had given up attempting to learn. She was among people who didn't understand her language; and she was adrift. And perhaps it was this feeling of being adrift among people who were narrow and literal that made her more forthright and passionate..."
Guerrillas, pp.99-100

370. Quoted in Dorothy Smith 1981 p.19

It is this centrality of *being-in-relation* to others that constitutes social/parochial reality.[371] Noam Chomsky's metaphor of *deep* and *surface* levels of linguistic structures has been carried into the study of human cultural interpretative research. The metaphor presumes *a priori* a structure within which utterances become communicative acts. Thus, it is possible for the *intentions* of speakers to be intercepted and understood. Dorothy Smith (1981) suggests that:

> The metaphor of a 'surface' is helpful for it enables us to envisage how our everyday world may not only be determined by social relations and forces external to that everyday world but also how those underlying relations are a system.[372]

Erving Goffman (1959) emphasized that the work of the social scientist combines impressions and identification of principles for organizing our involvement in events. Knowing ethnographically involves *reading* performance or expressions in keeping with the *surface* metaphor. Looking for the intention in contextual arrangements through locating meanings in communicative acts. This rich source of human discoursing which goes beyond a deciphering of words. The meanings that are invested in communicative acts involve the whole person in an existential moment complete, embodied and imbued with emotions in this immediate context.

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[371] Feminist scholars emphasize boldly the necessity to see identity formation from within the matrix that is explored in the process of individuation. See Jean Baker-Miller's article "The Development of Women's Sense of Self" (1983) and Towards a New Psychology of Women (1976).

[372] Dorothy Smith *Ibid* 1981 p.24

Caribbean anthropological research into African retentions among Afro-Caribbean populations has shown that the metaphor of deep and surface cultural relations is an important tool for uncovering a suppressed culture in contemporary expressions.[373] Anthropologists decry any suggestion that a people could be divested of their culture by force. The notion is blind. Slave managers could attempt to destroy conscious expressions or behaviours performed that they identified as African and/or dangerous but the less superficial structures at the level of the non-conscious and psychological functions were as inaccessible to the slave master as they were to the slave. These deep structures would ensure that the more profound psychological and philosophical principles would persist simply because they could not be grasped consciously.

Cultural Miscegenation through Pidginization

Dell Hymes (1971) has attempted to address the link between language and culture in the processes of pidginization or creolization in the Caribbean. African languages were silenced in the political arrangement of slavery and plantation economies. However, the very context of hauling a people into servitude could not make them a *tabula rasa* by scourging the body or herding people into barracks like dumb animals. The voices of the Caribbean are unique linguistic creations that are fashioned from the cultures that gave them their signifying powers. The discoursing is emergent or *sui generis* even when the language of the dominant culture is imposed to serve a particular set of interests. If the thesis that language and culture are inextricable is true, then it might be concluded that the African in the Caribbean is 'Afro-saxon' or a Black English person knowing nothing of the legacy of skin. The spoken word of the lived-in language embraces the legacies and furnishes the link between speakers. Discoursing incorporates or channels intentions as communication is the essence of symbolic interaction. The primacy of language is understood but communication or possessing a sense of communality must be opened up to the whole realm of signifying acts and routine rituals of communicative performance.

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[373] Melville Herskovits, George Eaton Simpson, Rex Nettleford, Edward Braithwaite, Jerome Handler, Michael Craton, Gordon Lewis, Maureen Lewis, Monica Schuler and Roger Abrahams, to name just a few who examined African legacies in contemporary society.

The Primacy of the semiotic in 'Culture'

Clifford Geertz's, 'Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture'(1973) is fashioned out of the ideas of Ernst Cassirer, Susanne Langer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle and Max Weber. Thus his focus for metaphors of culture rely on the *webs and threads* that suspend human experiences. Our experiences are grounded or suspended in essentially semiotic referents. An analysis of culture, is not grounded in the principles of positivist science via laws first modelled in Biology, but in an interpretive mode that would disclose the hermeneutic incubus: the *semiotic* webs and threads of the mosaic or melange.

For Geertz (1973) *culture is public* in the sense that it does not reside exclusively in the inter-mental realm of individual experiencing. Human actions and communications can be accessed and these are in and through symbolic acts. And these symbolic acts are already engaged in the social because of their *intentionality*. It is important to grasp that communication is beyond 'words' and 'behaviours'.[374]

> Culture consists of socially established structures of meanings in terms of which people do such things as signal conspiracies and join them or receive insults and answer them..[375]

The imaginative universe of human conduct makes each person a member of a culture but not necessarily a *product* only or a *dupe*. Human conduct is not programmed with the fidelity often assumed by hermeneutically sealed theories as this denies individual cognition and genuine purposive strategies or agency in individual social activity. Communication is pivoted on *intentionality* and *engagement* in discursive activities. Human conduct is directed and whole in itself:

> We...say of some people that they are transparent

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[374] Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice is founded on the overdetermining force of the unconscious in human motivation, instincts and manifest behaviour patterns. Psychoanalysis looks to the symbolic realms that are 'public' to interpret and analyze human conduct. For example Sigmund Freud's use of hypnosis, free association and dream sequence interpretation in clinical practice and theory formation.

[375] Clifford Geertz p.13

> to us. It is, however, important as regards this observation that one human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and what is more, even given a mastery of the country's language, we do not *understand* the people. (And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves.) We cannot find our feet with them.
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein[376]

To do ethnography does not lead to an attempt to become *as natives or mimics*, unless of course the mission is espionage as *culture is the very context within which signs become symbols*. The relational or the constituting realm of intentionality is where the intricate layers of semiotic expression are revealed and illuminated *through descriptive effort*.

Doing ethnography, according to Geertz (1973) includes all those aspects of *human social contact*: a. establishing rapport, b. selecting informants, c. transcribing texts, d. taking genealogies, e. keeping a diary, f. mapping the field and so on.

This effort is captioned under a notion borrowed from Gilbert Ryle, *thick description* because of the overlaying of captions and meanings that are pieced together in the work.

The Semiotic Needs Interpretation

The voices of *'strange'* or *'exotic'* women need to be interpreted if they are to be taken from the *concrete situation* of their social world to 'others' outside of this realm who may want to know these women or provide services or shape policies for them. Michael Leiber's **Street Life** (1981) emphasizes that the ethnographer 'liming' in downtown Port of Spain with young men on the 'hustle' must enter the *flow* of social discoursing. Interpretation then, should link by *feeling through* our very humanness. Interpretation is the reading or becoming aware of the vitality in events that perished into silence at the close of concrete speech acts.

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[376] Quoted in Geertz 1973 p.13

In interpretation, meaning is given sensible actuality to allow us to think realistically and concretely about what has been done or said. This is the important platform of the creative imagination and constructive participation in actions and comments that magnify the texturing of experience. These *thick descriptions*, are essential to the flow from the *parochial/particular to an epistemology* or framework for understanding. Jean Paul Sartre's **Between Existentialism and Marxism** (1974) emphasized that this was a flow from one parochial domain to what is essentially another parochial domain. What happens in theory construction according to this line of thinking is that the parochial is paraded as universal. But the reality is that disconnected super-theories are written in a *universalese* which is then used for academics to confuse one another or communicate with one another. Sartre would argue that academics belong to another 'particular' domain with a narrow set of interests but making universal claims and using their power as an intelligentsia for hegemonic influence.[377]

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[377] Dorothy Smith speaks to this directly and relates this to the interests of academics who are paid by universities being embraced by cer-

The semiotic approach of ethnography implies that theory should speak to one audience from the ground of description. Geertz (1973) suggests that this accessing of the conceptual world is best accomplished by hovering very *close to the ground* while avoiding the broad sweep of epistemological wholes. The cognitive forms are within the speech acts and descriptions. In an analogy of clinical practice Geertz writes:

> In the study of culture the signifiers are not symptoms, but symbolic acts or clusters of symbolic acts and the aim is not therapy but the analysis of social discourse.[378]

To go beyond description or the phenomenological direction of *apriori* essences, my work must establish what is *generic* from within the 'clusters of symbolic acts'. A *socio-genetic* model of constructing ideas from local idioms and expressions is dependent on the living voices that articulate and evaluate personal and social experiences. And this work recognizes the dialectical nature of any social construction and that the material is in a literal sense, fixed in time and space while the semiotic may escape such immanence.

Uncovering the Metaphors to Construct Theories

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tain values or interests that are the parochial domain of this territory. The intelligentsia is a powerful group in the ordering of myths and shaping of ideologies. Allison Griffin in 'The Way of all Ideology' makes a similar point in Bell Hooks Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre 1984.

[378] 378. Clifford Geertz *Ibid* p.26

The women of Beetham and John John are beyond the *horizon* of contemporary psychological epistemology. A *socio-genetic* approach takes the metaphors from the voices of the women in their own constituting of social reality. Thus, the cultural, historical and sociological must be integrated into an individual's *concept of self or identity*. In other words, the vocabulary (*surface*) and the grammar (*deep*) for the articulated wholes or metaphors are locked into the world-as-lived which is mediated by symbols in the texturing of *epistems* in cultural participation. The social realm is constituted prior to any attempt to locate a system of ideas or values ethnographically.

The hermeneutic work of deciphering *texts* from *transcriptions* of speech acts broadens cultural folkways through an interpretation of discourse. In doing this the women subjects hold the focus and share the mediation from 'talking' to 'epistemology'.

Identity in the Socio-Genetic Context

Morris Okun and Elizabeth Fisk (1983) made a distinction between meaning in context and actors engaged in the learning experience. The distinction gave the subject *agency*; the thinking intelligent human being is a knowing subject *engaged* in the activity of learning and deciphering appropriate action in the interests of the 'self'. The knower, the knowing and the known are brought into *contact/conflict* in a dialectical or interfacing way.

According to Wozniak (1973) the legacies of Soviet Psychology have enriched our appreciation of dialectical processes in contemporary psychology. Knowledge influences and is influenced by an individual's activities.[379]

Klaus Riegel's Psychology Mon Amour (1978) asserts that there is a creative transforming agency in Dialectical Psychology; a psychology where individuals undergo a series of metamorphoses in development in relation to socio-historical change. Identity and society are linked at the material level of external and internal interaction. Thus, Riegel has attempted a synthesis of George Herbert Mead's *outer dialectics* of our organism (symbolic interaction) and Jean Piaget's *inner dialectics* of the organism (perceptual-cognitive operations). In this synthesis human beings *create and produce, author and generate knowledge*. They juxtapose the 'I' and 'me' and the 'I' and 'thou' in any conception of identity over time. Thus, *Identity is intertwined with the vicissitudes of being-in-the-world.*

Strategic Identity in the Social Melange

The identity or self image for an agentic subject/protagonist in the socio-cultural byways is not only constituted by overdetermining socio-cultural relations but is a consequence of *deliberate or intentional personal construction.* Identity and cognition are fused and can be strategically manipulated. Max Weber (1968) coined the terms *aim-rational or instrumentally rational* to illustrate how action is influenced by cultural expectations for appropriate behavior in given concrete settings. These *expectations* are *used* as conditions or means for the attainment of the protagonists *own rationally calculated ends*.

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[379] Reminiscent of the laws of physics: For every action their is an equal and opposite reaction (which is followed by the law of entropy).

Barry Levine's **Benjy Lopez: a Picaresque Tale of Emigration and Return** (1980) illustrates the limits of a monolithic approach to social determinism by introducing a character who refuses to be meek, conforming and poor as a Puerto Rican immigrant in the United States. Levine has allowed himself to be close to his biographical subject, and says of Lopez:

> ...Listening to him tell about his observations of American life, I often felt I was hearing an anthropologist reporting on a quaint United States. ... In his culturally expansive life he has witnessed and catalogued a whole series of variations on life's themes.
>
> ...Lopez has not so much become 'Americanized' as he has become multi cultural, half outside at least two different social worlds.
>
> ...(His) resistance reflects a basic refusal to live a disappointed life. As long as he can, he intends to will
> his way. That, I believe is what Lopez means for his *words to convey*.
> 'Wit, Will and Words' 1980 pp.xxvii-xxx.

Erving Goffman's **Presentation of Self in Everyday Life** (1959) refers to this active intellectual presentation of self as *distance*. The individual is not central to sociology but Goffman had made vital links with embodied epistemology in formulating principles for personal and social interaction. The concept of *distance* or *strategic interaction* shows how individuals can manipulate George Herbert Mead's 'I' and 'me' and the 'I' and 'thou' through reflecting on the constituting aspects of socially assigned *identity*. Goffman stressed situations where mutual dealings took on a calculated or gamelike character.[380] Another variation on the concept of *identity* that extends the ideas of Weber's *aim rational action* and Goffman's *distance* is Anthony Maingot's notion of *strategic ethnicity*. This is the ability and disposition to emphasize or de-emphasize ethnic traits for advantageous bargaining.[381]

The linguistic strategies of speech acts, code switching, altering pitch, volume and rhythm are also used for strategic rational actions to achieve personal ends. Similarly the semiotic character of human negotiation of self in society through signifying acts provides a powerful arsenal for affirming oneself and denigrating or redefining others. Caribbean writers have drawn out large the affirming role of language among the downtrodden who understand the meaning of poverty, make humour out of political demagoguery and experience all manner of harassment by invoking a fatalistic philosophy as a prism through which reality is refracted.

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[380] Erving Goffman Strategic Interaction 1969 stressed the process of communication as well as the meaning conveyed. "Just as it can be assumed that it is in the interests of the observer to acquire information from a subject, so it is in the interests of the subject to appreciate that this is occurring and to control and manage the information the observer obtains; for in this was the subject can influence her own favor... (this requires the subject's) capacity to inhibit and fabricate expression."

[381] Barry Levine *Ibid* 1980 p.xxxiii)

The voices of the *weak* can evoke powerful images in hauntingly vivid words. Paule Marshall's mother figure, Silla Boyce, in Brown Girl Brownstone (1959) shows how this 'Bajan' immigrant to New York has honed her language skills to an art form giving voice to a creativity in social analyses where there is no other legitimate outlet for expression. For Silla Boyce the role of language is crucial as a strategy for survival:

> "...in this white-man world you got to take yuh mouth and make a gun". (p.313)

Human beings make sense of the world and poor black women have to confront life and assign meanings that are instrumental in their efforts to survive. Women use their voices to enter and exit, shrink and grow tall (and they use their silences in this very same signifying way). Add to this an *aim rational* wardrobe sense, make-up, hair design, movement, body language and so on and the creative imagination for strategically placed survival skills is endless for the truly active protagonist bent on emerging from the ghetto's stereotyped ascriptive structures as well as the economic shackles of unskilled, labour intensive, monotonous and unrewarded employment along with having to cope with 'her' children. Take this example of Mrs. Bhakcu from V.S. Naipaul's 'The Mechanical Genius':

> For a long time I think Bhakcu experimented with rods for beating his wife, and I wouldn't swear that it wasn't Hat who suggested a cricket bat. ...(A) second-

> hand cricket bat was bought from one of the groundsmen at the Queen's Park Oval, and oiled, and used on Mrs. Bhakcu.
>
> ....She like my mother, thought that she was born to be a clever handler of money, born to make money sprout from nothing at all.
>
> ....All the time he (Bhakcu) had the lorry, he hated his wife, and he beat her regularly with the cricket bat. But she was beating him too, with her tongue, and I think Bhakcu was really the loser in these quarrels. ...
>
> My mother said, 'Why Bhakcu don't go out and get a work?'
>
> Mrs. Bhakcu said, 'But how you want that?'...'You could see he working with all the rude and crude people it have here in Port of Spain?'
>
> .... My mother said, 'Well...He is a Brahim, he know the Ramayana, and he have a car. Is easy for him to become a pundit, a real proper pundit.'
>
> Mrs. Bhakcu clapped her hands. 'Is a first-class idea. Hindu pundits making a lot of money these days.'
>
> So Bhakcu became a pundit. ...
>
> He still tinkered with his car. He had to stop beating Mrs.Bhakcu with the cricket bat, but he was happy.
>
> I was haunted by the thought of the dhoti-clad Pundit Bhakcu, crawling under a car, attending to a crank-shaft, while poor Hindus waited for him to attend to their souls.[382]

The moral of the story is ever clear. The mechanical pundit is a 'first class' idea and the woman whose genius it is 'to make money sprout from nothing' is definitely affirmed. This story has a genderic twist that would suggest that the 'gossip' between women is productive of self interest and given a creative impetus - for the mechanic-turned-pundit parades appropriate peace. The battered Mrs. Bhakcu no longer suffers at the other end of the bat from Queen's Park. And the prestige value befitting her newfound status as pundit's wife is not lost in the service of promoting her own interests and cornering a modicum of respect from the other women in the community.

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[382] V.S. Naipaul. Miguel Street (1959) England: Penguin 1984, pp.126-127.

CHAPTER 4

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT: THE NEIGHBORHOOD EAST OF THE DRY RIVER

The conversations conducted took place in the homes of women from the eastern area of Port of Spain.[383] The women were from different age groupings[384] and had memories of different political arrangements in the historiography of their society but they were all lower class residents and predominantly Afro-Trinidadians. Those who lived in the Beetham Housing Estate had entered these National Housing Authority dwellings through the slum clearance program or through crisis intervention as with the people from John John whose homes were destroyed in the fire of April, 1978. The pensioner fire victims without kin to accommodate them were temporarily housed in the Community Centre until places were found in the Pensioners' Quarters at the Beetham.

I was introduced to the women I taped (and many other residents as well) through two of the pensioners living in the 'age ghetto' of the Pensioners' Quarters of the Beetham Housing Estate; Mistress Hester Lange and Mr. Egbert Compton. Compton had been a resident of John John for more than 30 years and identified with that *'side'* because although he now sleeps in the Beetham, he *belongs* to the hill and goes to the club and racing pool with men who were once neighbours. Compton had moved into the Community Centre for 3 years after the fire until government officers relocated the homeless. When I first started taping conversations with women, Compton was sharing his little place with Hester or Mistress Lang as she had *fallen out* with her daughter over some *commess* that involved her estranged husband and a rift in the family over a list of infractions that *shamed* her name and signified an intolerable lack of respect towards the mother/grandmother. This was not the first time that Mistress Lang had left a family member's house over some quarrel or other since her own little place made from crates dumped on the LaBasse was destroyed in the John John fire.[385] But until the situation in her family was resolved, Mistress Lang had her two *grips* under Compton's bed. She remained there until her pension was issued, and just as Compton had forewarned with a barb of cynicism and parochial wisdom, her family feud was hastily resolved in time to share the pension cheques in her daughter's household. Compton's local knowledge is as impeccable as his tolerance for the way things are arranged in this neighborhood and he was a valuable commentator on all manner of experiences and events.

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[383] The Beetham Housing Estate, John John, Sealots, Tamarind (Columbus) Square, Piccadilly Street, Rodney Street and Clifton Hill.

[384] Taped conversations: age range 16 years to 76 years. The older women had known a colonial youth while the younger women had only known post independence society.

Although Egbert Compton is known to the Government census information as living in the Beetham, he gives his contact address as "de drinkin' parlour dere in Queen Street where it does have de racin' pool....Just ask for me dere, as dere I be more known dan de Prime Minister." In fact Edgar Compton had a *reputation* for his gambling and his drinking and prides himself on knowing all the calypsonians on the hill from the time before Attilla had reached his first long pants.[386] Hester Lang considered herself a *respectable* woman and introduced me to her family, her neighbours and 'sisters' in the Spiritual Baptist community. Through Compton I was introduced to women from John John, the 'wives' of stevedores who had worked with him on the wharf and several of the women who were homeless and sleeping on cardboard in Tamarind Square (also known as Columbus Square) in Port of Spain. Compton joins the community of poor people who receive food from the Catholic Church of a lunch time in Tamarind Square. In typical Compton jocular style, he says that he dines with Father Pantin most days.[387] The women I met were members of the jamette class and the themes from their lives reveal a peculiar repertoire quite distinct from life worlds of the middle classes at home or abroad.

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[385] Locate and insert Hester's description of her 'datsunville' which she had for herself all 'clean and nice'.

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[386] Insert Compton's remarks where he boasts of being known in all the tents in Port of Spain. He knew the mothers of these kaiso's before these little boys sang a note. He was well known on the hill and if Trinidad was smaller, the community on the hill was intact and familiar. It is part of Compton's style to boast through being-known in this circle and of having played his music and belonged to his 'side' over his life span after the passage of consolidating crew membership in youth.

[387] To the credit of the Catholic Archbishop, Fr. Pantin the poor of Trinidad are aided by the Church and individuals of this class feel that they are familiar with the man in the highest office in the land. Compton thought that Fr Pantin would listen to any complaints that were carried to him and swore that Pantin would be the one who would clear the rastas our of the Pensioners' Quarters so that the elderly could live in peace.

However, before I introduce the women, let me introduce the demographic context in which they conduct their lives. Trinidad's 1980 census population was given as 1,079,791. At that time 35.3% of the total female population of the island was resident in the major division of St George and 43% of these women were residents of St Anns Ward. Even in 1870 one quarter of Trinidad's population resided in cities.[388] The island is 1,980 square miles in area but the population is primarily urban with St Anns Ward having the highest density of residents in the Republic due to a history of urban migration from rural areas and small island immigrants setting up home here.

The ethnic geography of Trinidad and Tobago in the 1980 census revealed that Negroes represented 40.8%, East Indians 40.65%, Mixed race 15.4%, White .9%, Chinese .5%, Syrian / Lebanese .09% and Others .7%. In the 1961 electoral districts of Laventille and Port of Spain East the proportion of Negro voters was 85% and 73.6% respectively, while Mixed race was 10% and 18.7% respectively, East indians were 4% and 5% respectively. These electoral figures indicate that the area under study is predominantly Negro or Afro-Trinidadian in ethnic composition.[389]

Albert Gomes's biography included reminiscence scenes of the urban landscape that echo themes portrayed in Walcott's Laventille that forms a prologue to this thesis.

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[388] Bridget Brereton Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870-1900 Cambridge University Press, 1979 p.89

[389] Percentages of electoral figures calculated from Selwyn Ryan. Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago: A Study of Decolonization in a Multiracial Society. 1972 pp.284-85.

> Belmont where we lived, was an easy-going suburb with its humble dwellings, churches and shops - and, of course, cesspits that fouled the air with their foetid and suffocating stink... Immediately at the back of our home, separated only by a wooden fence, were barrack-rooms where some three large families, children and all, were squeezed like sardines into rooms - a breeding ground of promiscuity, vice and disease. Yet, surprisingly, the people who had to endure these degrading conditions laughed, sang and danced, occasionally appearing pleased with their lives. Even in those distant days, as I recall them, the West Indian Negro displayed his (her) rare ability to rise in laughter above the gnawing rigors of his condition. But for the blessing of almost perpetual sunshine, and his (her) ebullient temperament, it might have been impossible for him (her) to survive.[390]

Dr. Eric Williams's biography Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister (1969) would recall similar scenes from his Trinidad childhood landscape to demonstrate the conditions accorded to the lower class and indicate through a description of housing conditions how wretched their occupants must be. The houses underscored their menial status and every aspect of material disadvantage. Williams took the statistics of 1911 to give testimony to the fact that relics of slavery existed in the poverty of urban areas and that 40% of the rooms in Port-of-Spain were of the barrack type. *'The cesspit was the rule, the water closet the exception.'*[391] Bertie Gomes, as he was affably named among Trinidadians encapsulates the scene of the barrack yard:

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[390] Albert Gomes. Through a Maze of Color 1974, p.5.

[391] Eric Williams. Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister 1969, p.17

> In the barracks the cruel struggle for survival was unceasing. This truly was a jungle in microcosm. Although there was loud laughter there were also anguished cries, even violence. I always think of it as a sort of test-tube in which could be observed the extent to which the will to live persists under the most intolerable conditions...
>
> Ordinary standards of morality did not apply to the barrack rooms. How could they, when so many persons were huddled together in one room without even a pretense of privacy? And where the struggle to survive was so remorseless the presence of cruelty seemed inevitable.[392]

In 1980 the Central Statistical Office figures for the Beetham Housing Estate have shown that of the 868 dwellings there, the 'outside' cesspit (20%) is giving way to the 'inside' sewer (75%), the kerosene lamp (6%) is being replaced by the electric light (94%) and the private water closet (82%) has taken the place of the public standpipe (13%) or pipe to the yard (4%). The National Housing Authority has brought respectability to those who can now boast of 'a light' and 'inside' pipe and toilet. However, in most of the pensioners' homes I visited the standard cooking facility was the pitch oil primus. Where there was a stove, there was usually a fridge, but this was the exception rather than the rule among pensioners.[393] In Eastern Port of Spain a microcosm of the prevailing standards of attitudes and values prevails such that residents of certain areas consider themselves a cut above residents across the bridge or beyond a certain street. Indeed there are residents who have every appliance while others compound squalour and filth with an absence of any technological aid.

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[392] Albert Gomes Through a Maze of Color 1974, p.5.

[393] Diane Austin. Urban Life in Kingston, Jamaica: The Culture and Class Ideology of Two Neighbourhoods. Pointed to the idiomatic use of 'inside' and 'outside' in Jamaican speech. This was also true of the women I spoke with. Refer to the section on language.

The pressure of population on housing in this area shows that 27% of Beetham households accommodate 6 or more people and 90% of these people are cramped into quarters with 2 bedrooms or less (11% have no separate bedroom). Many residents in the John John area are cramped into substandard deteriorating wooden dwellings that have been bought by the government and the hope is that the government will find subsidized housing when redevelopment plans actually go ahead. Indeed there was a 2 storey dwelling I visited where the women on the second floor were constantly harassed by the woman below and vice versa because the drips from the infants and the spilling of water posed a constant source of irritation for the neighbour below. In fact, these neighbours have not spoken since notice of court action followed an incident where one infant, left without a diaper managed to urinate directly above the neighbour's loungeroom furniture.

The standard of living among lower class people is crippled by the high fertility rate of this section of the population and the number of potential breadwinners to cater for the very young and the very old is exacerbated by chronic levels of unemployment and underemployment. Teen-Age pregnancies are prevalent and many children are born into homes where resources are already stretched to their limit. Central Statistical Office figures for 1980 show that 64% of females and 54% of males are under 20 years or over 65 years.[394] In 1975 the Central Statistical Office recorded the level of unemployment for Trinidad and Tobago at 15.2% and the unofficial estimates of unemployment was given as 20%-25% with females showing higher rates of unemployment then men while the under 24 year old age bracket recorded the highest levels of unemployment. Unemployment among urban youth shows pockets where the rate is beyond 60% of the population.[395] "The gravity of the unemployment situation, especially as it affects young people, is the most explosive problem facing the region today"[396] Throughout the Caribbean region an unemployment rate in excess of 25% is alarmingly high.

Low wages, poor housing and high unemployment have bred the social pathology of a high crime rate. In the Beetham there are notorious sections of high criminal activity. The victims of the 1978 John John fire now living between 17th and 13th Streets have a disproportionately large number of felons in their midst. Ironically enough, the residents here were among the first to in-

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394. Central Statistical Office. Population and Housing Census 1980: Age Structure, Religion, Ethnic Group, Education and Administrative Areas. pp.2-5.

395. Farley Braithwaite. Unemployment and Social Life: A Study of the Unemployed in Trinidad. 1983 pp.1-6. The areas chosen for this research concentrated on areas where the rate of unemployment was beyond 30% of the population.

396. "The Development Challenges Facing the National Economies in the 1980's," in The Caribbean Community in the 1980's, Report by Caribbean Experts. in Jorge Heine Puritans and Afro-Saxons: The United States and the Commonwealth Caribbean in the 1980's. Washington: Wilson Centre, Smithsonian Institute 1984 p.5

stall burglar proofing and to bar' round their yards to discourage thieves. In 1974 there were 2,940 males and 170 females committed to imprisonment, of these 70% were awaiting trial, execution or deportation, 5 women were held for nonpayment of debts, 20 had defaulted on fines. In that same year there were 11 executions listed under Deaths in Prisons. In 1974 an analysis of offenses for which trials were pending showed 42 for murder, 17 for manslaughter, 93 for felonious wounding and 127 other crimes against the person (this would include rape and incest cases). There were 319 charges of burglary, 315 counts of larceny, plus 313 other crimes against property and 32 counts of forgery and crimes against currency. Minor crimes of indecent assaults, embezzlement, possession of house breaking implements,[397] wounding and assaults causing bodily harm were more numerous. Between 1970 and 1972 there were 9,360 juvenile offenders, 25% being charged with larceny and/or theft. There were 97 sex offences and 772 charges of possession of narcotics (usually marijuana). There are only 7 counts of prostitution recorded among juveniles and young offenders which could only indicate a degree of leniency on young offenders or a very blind eye on the part of the police in detecting juvenile prostitutes. Be this as it may, the figures on crime indicates a very active underworld as a large number of felonies are committed without detection and where domestic violence is concerned there are many cases that go unreported.[398]

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[397] It must be noted that the crime of possessing house breaking implements carries higher penalties for the offender that the crime of carnal knowledge or rape in many instances. See Stephany Daly "Detention of a woman or girl either in a brothel or with intent that a man shall have unlawful carnal knowledge of her is also deal with at considerable length but despite elaborate provisions the penalty is only two years' imprisonment. To put this in the context of the other penalties under the same Act, obstructing a clergyman in the discharge of his duty merits up to four years, whilst being found at night with housebreaking implements can lead to ten years' imprisonment. Such comparisons suggest that we do not attach enough importance to the trauma that sexual offences may cause a young person." **The Developing Legal Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago** 1982 p.9

According to Eric Williams the West Indian society has inherited a tradition of illegitimate births that the housing conditions and general struggle to survive among these residents has done much to perpetuate. In 1965 41.5% of births were illegitimate and in 1974 the percentage had risen steadily to 43.1%. In the division of St George the number of live births has remained high. While the number of live births in Port of Spain has gone from 3,314 in 1965 to 1,733 in 1974 the St George figures for 1965 were 9,344 (29% of the total live births) and in 1974 the number was 9,222 (35.3% of the total). These figures suggest that a national trend of declining birth rates is not evenly distributed.[399] The figures on abortions are difficult to obtain as abortion is illegal under sections 56 and 57 of the Offences Against the Person Act although the law is not enforced. In 1972 there were 11,000 known complications arising out of illegally induced abortions which would indicate an abortion rate in excess of 30,000. And Family Planning Association records indicate that between 1971 and 1973, 36% of their 19 year old clients had already procured at least one abortion. Deaths attributed to abortion complications between 1970 and 1980 showed an annual average of 14 (40%) of registered maternal deaths in Trinidad and Tobago.[400] A Family Planning Association survey conducted in 1970 indicated that the rate of abortions was higher among women of African descent and among women of lower educational standing. The World Fertility Survey of 1977 showed that the mean age of first sexual union was 18.6 as opposed to 17.7 twenty years earlier.[401] However, accurate reporting on questions of this nature is usually suspect, while variations from the mean are lost in the averaged figures. Older women I spoke with who had ceased to be threatened by the intense scrutiny on sexualization among pubescant girls, judged that young girls of 11 and 12 were making babies and implied that standards of modern youth had declined rather than advanced in this area. However, statistics may lie, but none could be so distorted as the testament assessing the morality of a matron's own youth.

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[398] National Commission on the Status of Women Seminar on Domestic Violence, Hotel Normandy, June 25, 1981.

[399] CSO Annual Statistical Digest 1974/75, no.23, 1977 p.37.

The history of life expectancy in Trinidad is a grim reminder of the uncertainties of the flesh that persisted long after the cruel statistics of slave mortality had reckoned that the population actually declined as slave deaths far exceeded slave births and slave imports right up to emancipation in Trinidad (which was reckoned to be moderate compared to other slave holding colonies of the time).[402] The life expectancy of males born in 1910-12 was approximately 39 years compared to 63 years in 1969-71. Similarly the life expectancy of females born in 1910-12 was approximately 40 years compared to 68 years in 1969-71. Water-borne diseases, diarrhea, enteritis and dysentery constituted the chief causes of death. Malaria and ankylostomiasis and tuberculosis warranted special attention. Increased sanitation, public housing and utilities plus free medical services have done much to improve life expectancy figures. The situation still lags behind standards of longevity in the developed world and class factors cannot be ignored under the broad sweep of national averages. Among the women in this study there was constant reference to mortality in their families particularly among infants in the first year of life and it was common to here that either one parent or both parents had died before the girls had reached their teens.

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[400] Stephanie Daly The Developing Legal Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago The National Commission on the Status of Women 1982 p.94.

[401] Cited by Stephanie Daly. *Ibid* 1982 p.12.

An Independent Trinidad has taken great strides in providing universal secondary education. However, of the total population of Women over 40 years of age in 1980, 19,357 had received no education and 85,583 had received some education at the Primary level. In the Ward of St Anns 84.6% of the women over 40 years of age had received either no education or Primary education (7.25% had never attended school). Of the women pensioner bracket in St Anns 11.5% had received no schooling.[403] Among the women I spoke with it was common to learn that formal education had played a very minor role in preparing them for life even though the idea of 'Education' figured prominently in respectability values, not as a process but as a prize and honour bestowing privilege and enormous pride. Informal education was much more apparent as women learnt from relatives and friends all those crafts that could be exploited to hustle for survival in avenues of the informal economy.

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[402] See references to slave mortality in Chapter 1.

[403] Percentages calculated from figures given by the CSO on p.70 Population and Housing Census 1980, vol II. 1983.

There has been a long tradition of exploitation and emigration in the Caribbean region. Waves of migration have found their way to the Caribbean and like birds of passage they have flown North when they had gathered enough wealth to make their exit and enter the lands of promise. 17.5% of all legal immigrants to the United States between 1970 and 1978 came from the Caribbean. The Haitian "boat people" and the Cuban refugees made up only a small proportion of the total numbers emigrating from the West Indies. Added to this figure would be the many West Indian students in the United States and the illegal flow of immigrants providing agricultural labour and domestic services without the benefits of citizenship. When the emigration figures to Canada, the United Kingdom and other European countries are added to the tally of people emigrating from the area a significant flow is registered. In fact, there are more 'West Indians'[404] in the North Atlantic that there are in the Caribbean. Between 1968 and 1975, 85,195 people emigrated from Trinidad.[405]

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[404] 2 out of every 3 Puerto Ricans, 1 out of every 5 Jamaicans, 1 out of every 6 Barbadians, and 1 out of every 12 Dominicans lived in the U.S. in 1980. Jorge Heine 'Puritans and Afro-Saxons: the United States and the Commonwealth Caribbean in the 1980's'. Latin American Program Working Papers #136 Smithsonian Institute, 1984 p.15.

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[405] Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago Annual Statistical Digest 1974/75 1977 p.142

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDIES

The collection of tape-recorded conversation sequences is an attempt to furnish a volume of speech acts for a critical reconstitution of the meaning of women's social experience, as it is lived and produced in the mundane settings of their life-world. This choice of method reflects the emphasis on an oral tradition in the community and an appreciation of the bond of literacy with class and culture in a domain where the culture of the lower class population is seen as distinct from the educated middle class and its closer approximation to metropolitan cultures of a colonial ideology that persists.

The three case studies of women included here are inserted to illustrate not only the sequence of conversation but the themes that emerge in the context of conversation. I recorded over 30 conversations with women in the course of conducting this research and the transcribed tapes filled over 700 typed pages of script. The case studies were not chosen to convey the 'typical' woman of a certain age but to show how individual women fashion their lives and talk about their themselves in relation to others and their environment. It is this internal dynamic that lends coherence to an idiographic approach to coping styles over the life course.

A content analysis of themes can be used to look at communalities in the areas of discourse across the experiences that were told. A sampling of themes will be fashioned from the lives in Chapter 6 .

ROSE DANIELS

Personal Information

Address: Beetham Housing Estate.
Age:23 years
Date of birth: 1960.
Place of Birth: Grenada
Childcaregiver: Rose was reared by an aunt (her mother's sister). Rose's own children are with her. When she has gone out to work, she has left her first born with neighbours and kin. The children to her current partner have been cared for by Rose herself or for short intervals by their father or paternal grandmother. After her own experience of being raised by her aunt, she is determined to care for her own children. Having a family under one roof has become a personal ambition and an article of faith central to Rose.
Education: Rose received primary education at Success R C school but her education was secondary to her usefulness around the house as she grew older. There was a double standard in her aunt's house where the aunt's two children were encouraged to attend school while Rose was encouraged to work in the house and help care for the other children on her mother's side of the family.

Rose also mentioned attending handicraft classes in the evening after she finished school but this did not last for long. Formal education has given way to informal education on matters of importance to a young woman who is primarily concerned with holding on to her man, keeping her family together, being a good mother and managing the household operations of cooking, sewing, washing, ironing, budgeting for food and necessities.
Unions: 2 common law unions (Rose moved in with Naomie's father when she was 14 yrs.) and visiting or friending unions.
Age at first child's birth: 15 years.
Number of Children: 3 and expecting another.
Number of children (partner/spouse) : 1+3+3=7 soon to be 8.
Number Siblings: 6 sisters (then she mentions 2 young ones a boy 9,and a girl 10 or 11 who are being cared for by their mother). I did not ask her about her father's children, so she could have more on that side. She is not particularly close to any of her sisters although she 'moves good' with her older sister and one younger sister.
Housing: Rented NHA duplex house in partner's name.
Current partner: Daily paid labourer with 'works' and has remained so for 7 years. The government was letting go workers and it was feared that her partner would be unemployed (and he was let go some months after).
Occupation: Rose has worked as a domestic employee and service

station attendant. She has only worked for wages for brief periods and she has determined to live the life of a 'housewife'. However, her plans for home-improvements and her partner's limited income are causing Rose to look at the possibility of entering the work force. Ideally, she would like to become a police officer. This would mean attending night school to pass school leaving subjects and then becoming a police trainee. This would be a hard road for someone with very young children.

Financial support: Rose is cared for by her common law partner and her first child is supported by her (the child's) father. There is some tension created by the fact that her partner has to support four older children as well as the children born in this union. Rose has to keep her family on a very small income even though the other children were often getting very little from their father. The mothers of these other children have gone out to work and entered other unions while Peter puts in whatever he can afford to support his 'outside' children.

Support in times of illness: Her partner's mother helps with the washing, cooking and cleaning when Rose is ill, especially in the first months of pregnancy, and again when the babies are born. Rose points to the fact that her biological mother does not offer to do this even though she lives very close. The implication here, is that she would expect her mother to be her support in crises periods.

Rose's partner also stays home from work to help when Rose has been ill. However, on the days that he remains at home, there is no income so this is a mixed blessing.

Friendship: Rose has relied on her pentecostal neighbours and a girlfriend living around the block in times of trouble. She likes to get out of the house to go by her friend. In fact she goes by her friend daily.[406] Friendship has been extremely important to Rose as she does not have the conventional family support fashioned on the link between mother and daughter.

Support in crisis: Rose's mother took Rose when she was feuding with her aunt about her liaison with her first child's father but that did not work out. Both her mother and her aunt were of one mind on the matter of 'boyfriends' for Rose in her early teens. Rose's expectations of her mother were dashed when her mother appeared to reject her in rejecting the liaison with this older man. She resolved her problems by moving in with her boyfriend.

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[406] Rose's friendship of long standing has been severely criticized by her mother-in-law and by some of the older men in the community as they hold on to the conviction that friendships between women means trouble for the male-female relationship. One old man felt that Rose should stay under her own roof and not be out on the streets in another woman's house everyday. Roger Abrahams (1983) comments the 'friendships between women are frowned upon after adolescence as this is seen as a threat to the stability of the family. Hence, female sociality..is across generations. The older a woman is the less she fears that her respectability will be challenged by visiting (her female peers).' (p.136)

When Rose was trying to sever the relationship with her boyfriend she moved in with another man and then in with her father. But she kept returning to her child's father because of her child and her emphasis on being at home with her child and the economic advantage of being cared for. So both parents have been involved at times of crises. And there has always been an ambivalence about the father of her first child as he would liaise with other women and then come back for Rose and his child. She wanted to believe in new beginnings at each reconciliation as she needed or felt she needed the financial support, but she could not endure the hatred that was building up inside her for this man. (He is still providing for Rose's daughter).

Coping Strategies: Rose made a link between dependence on a man and her personal security and preferred family form. The problem as she saw it was finding the 'right' man. She resolved to leave her boyfriend by seeking out someone who would be a better match for her personal ideals, so she moved out on her own until she found another boyfriend to support her (an arrangement of convenience), then in with her father while she formed a relationship with her 'best' friend's common law partner.

Different acquaintances of Rose have mentioned that before Rose made her relationship with her current partner public, Rose was the constant companion of this other woman...'where you see one, you see the other' was the description supplied of this friendship. But this friendship ended abruptly and there is much hostility between the two women. So Rose has exploited friendship and accepted the consequences to make personal gains.

Religion: Rose attended the Roman Catholic Church and made her first Holy Communion in that church. Later, Rose was baptized into the Baptist faith but has since fallen out in dramatic fashion. She was a Baptist along with her former girlfriend, but there was much tension in this arrangement when Rose displaced her friend by friending with her common law partner and moving in to the house. She is searching for another faith and appears to be favouring the Pentecostal church while considering what the Jehovah's Witnesses have to offer. Her husband is encouraging her to find a faith but he himself is not considering joining any faith.

If religion is the opiate of the masses, then Rose and most of the women I spoke to were addicted. They had a real need to appeal to some higher order of power and be affiliated with a church. Churches appear to be less dominated by property and real estate in this area and for most women a church was an organized body of people rather than a building with a steeple. God was seen as a personal ally in lives dogged by instability and constant pressures.

Family Planning: Rose does not believe in the methods offered at

Family Planning clinics but she does want to limit her family size; a dilemma that seems common among the women interviewed. At this point in time when her partner's job security is uncertain and another baby is due the idea of limiting family size is an issue, but this still does not alter Rose's attitudes to family planning methods. She fears that the contraceptive 'pill' will make her sick, and the 'injection' would be worse. The IUD was treated with healthy suspicion and having her 'tubes tied' seemed to offend God's creation. The condom she disliked and the spermicides were as distasteful as they were messy. It seemed that abortion was an option in this scheme where intercourse was as natural as conception. This pregnancy had meant that Rose could put off contraceptive decisions until the baby came.

Superstition: Rose is a firm believer in supernatural intervention by spirits and by God. When she refers to people as 'witches' she is not only denigrating them, she is sincere in the use of this term. She does believe that there are evil forces and her life is riddled with events that bear testimony to this.

We also learn that her 'father-in-law' uses the psalms and she hopes that all that good will turn around on him. Reading the psalms is a powerful formula for dealing with enemies and Rose's 'father-in-law' is working on behalf of the woman that Rose has displaced.

Rose's 'father-in-law' refuses to eat the food that she prepares. There are commonly held beliefs that women (in particular) might put something in food to control those who eat this food. Peter's father is convinced that his son is a poor judge of women if he was not able to see the designs that Rose had for him. Fears that slave cooks might poison their owners or that trusted slaves might poison other slaves were well founded in the historical record. Rose's father-in-law would not eat the food she prepared for him and he would only eat from the plate that Rose had prepared for her husband.

Rose's 'father-in-law' predicts a 'devil child' on the one hand, and on the other, he spreads the poison that the child's father is not his son. This is particularly damning in a community where fidelity is rare among men. Women rely on reputed fathers for financial support and this support could be withdrawn if a. the father suspects infidelity or b. if he concludes that the community is sufficiently uncertain as to tolerate his decision to withdraw support.

Magistrates' Court: Rose sees her day in court as important to demonstrate that justice is seen to be done - a retribution scene. This has a long history and resorting to courts to settle disputes is a frequent phenomenon. Rose does not believe that the court is not biased, dispassionate or free from corruption but she does believe that she can have her say and air her grievance publicly.[407]

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407. This theme has a long historical background as slave women after 1824 (when they were exempt from corporal punishment and slave testimony was admitted to court) made frequent use of the courts. See Lucille Mathurin:The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies during Slavery. 1975.

Conversation Sequence

J: Were you born in Trinidad?

R: No, Grenada.

J: How long have you been in Trinidad?

R: Since I was a baby. My mother left there with me in her belly and at the last she made me over dere.

J: So she was just visiting Grenada and when you were still small you came back again.

Comment: Rose's mother came to Trinidad from Grenada in 1960. Migration to Trinidad from the smaller islands has been common since emancipation when conditions in Trinidad were made more attractive to emancipated labourers. In the 20th century the wealth from oil production has continued to lure immigrants. Refer to Immigration tables in the appendix.

R: Well she didn' stay dere after I born. After I born she come back.

J: So you were born in Grenada which makes you Grenadian. Have you been back?.

R: Never.

J: Have you got family in Grenada?

R: Yes, on my mother's side.

J: What about your father, is he from Grenada?

R: No, he from St.Vincent.

Comment: Rose parents are both from smaller Caribbean islands: Grenada and St Vincent. Migration from smaller islands to Trinidad continues as there are more opportunities for economic advancement in Trinidad. This fact was alluded to in V. S. Naipaul's The Middle Passage where passengers from smaller islands saw Trinidad in much the same light as others saw England or North America. My comment that Rose could become Miss Caricom is flavoured by the fact that a meeting of Caricom Governments was being held at the Hilton *at the time of this conversation, and Rose is the product of a union involving several islands. It seemed from news reports that Rose's parents had been more successful at bridging the gap between island nations than the delegates at the Hilton.*

J: You could be Miss Caricom! Does your father live in Trinidad or did he stay in Grenada or St Vincent?

R: No, he livin' over here.

J: Did you come up with your mother and father or just your mother?

Comment: Rose grew up with her maternal aunt as primary care giver. She lived in Trou Macaque in Laventille. As we will learn, this arrangement was functional but it was not a happy childhood home.

R: well to be trut'ful eh, I grow with a aunt o' mine. So I live with neither mother, neither father and I grow with my aunt. My mother's sister.

J: So where did you grow up then?

R: Trou Macaque.......Laventille side.

J: And you went to school where?

Comment: There is a sad irony in the name of Rose's school. As any success that Rose has had could not be a celebration of her educational background. Her ambition for a 'family' comes out of a schooling that has failed her. The school has not offered an alternative path to economic advancement or personal independence.

R: I went to Success R.C. primary school.

J: And did you finish primary school and go on to Secondary?

Comment: The emphasis on education for Rose was marginal to her importance as a domestic helper in the home. Rose grew up side by side with her cousins who were encouraged to attend to their education while she was made to perform menial tasks around the house. Thus, it might be seen that children in the care of their kin were not necessarily *brought up by those standards we might assume in Canada. It is here made clear that Rose was performing the tasks that we would expect the caregiver to perform. She describes herself as being more like the 'housewife' and she is using the term to emphasize her subordination.*

R: No.. I jus'...Well to be trut'ful eh, the way how I grow up an' t'ing I didn' have no... I grow up wid my aunt but yuh know like your father or your mother when time was to come for common entrance well they would try but they didn' get my birth paper an' t'ing so I didn' get no chance to sit for common entrance.

Comment: As Rose was born in Grenada, it would have been difficult to obtain a birth certificate. It is very likely that her parents came to Trinidad without informing the Trinidad Government of their intentions. Producing a birth certificate prior to taking exams would eliminate candidates who entered the country illegally. It also eliminated those candidates whose births were not registered by the government.

J: Have you been able to get your birth paper since?

R: Well jus' de other day I get it.

J: It was complicated getting one as you were born in Grenada... so you missed out on Common Entrance?

R: Yes. Well after I get and I leave school I use' to go to a night class..a evenin' class really learnin' different t'ings but I didn' stay... handycraft and different t'ings.

J: How old were you when you left school?

R: 14.

J: So between school and having children did you work at all?

Comment: Rose ran away from home when she was 14 to live with her boyfriend, who provided for her. The friction between Rose and her aunt was temporarily resolved when her mother took Rose but things deteriorated rapidly when Rose became con-

vinced that her mother really did not care for her. We will learn that this personal discovery was very painful for Rose. We will also learn that Rose stays at home with her children and is struggling to be a homemaker. This is something that she resolved she would do after her own childhood experiences.

R: No...Well to be really trut'ful, when I was aroun' 18 or so I end up workin' with some people, a lady and she husband, just a half day just to cook and work for dem. That is all. I use to do. And I didn' stay for so long yuh know a' cause I really didn' like this work yuh know. I didn' stay so long.

J: Were they reasonable or were they hard to work for?

R: No. I find they is nice people.

J: You didn't like the work or was the money too little?

R: Not really.. I find the money too little.

J: And where was that?

R: In St Anns...St Anns side

Comment: Rose worked as a domestic servant when she was trying to survive on her own with her child as she realized that she could not break out of the relationship with her child's father while she was dependent on him for food and shelter. She also finds another boyfriend to support her but this does not work out satisfactorily.

J: So you just had to go down the hill. So when did you have your first baby?

R: Nadine is de biggest one I have. She de firs'.

J: Patsycoo's little girl was about the same age and she (pointing to Nadine) was bigger. So where were you living when you had Nadine?

R: Tremaka...where I brought up but I was livin' with her father.

Comment: Rose's first child was born in 1975 when she was 15 years old.

J: When did you move from your aunt's place?

R: From home? Well hmm...She wasn' easy, she wasn' a easy person yuh know. We didn' have any disagreements but she a person like this...Well I livin' with she and I grow up wid she. I use' to have to do everyt'ing in de house. I did come as if I was de housewife. Everyt'ing, wash...an' dere was a whole set of us. Only two chil'ren she have but she use' to take all de family and jus' mind dem, mind dem, mind dem, yuh know and I use' to do all. It was I use' to cook an' wash an' all o' dat an' I had to go to school too. So it was kin'a, ..it wasn' easy. An' when..well I use' to always say to m'self, I wish dat I could be aroun' my mother.

Comment: It is clear from what Rose says here that she did have an image of what her mother should be. A mother should care for her children and be open to her children. The child should be her primary concern. But in Rose's case we learn that her mother does not fit Rose's expectations.

R: I use' to say to m'self but my mother didn' really care. Like some mothers would have chil'ren an' dey would care about dem. But she didn' really. She didn' really care. An' I use' to...well, I didn' really know, I didn' really know it at de time, although I was growin' up an' t'ing and den I started talkin' to she (Nadine's) father and when my aunt find out dat I does be talkin' wid him an' t'ing she started gettin' on. And it cause' a whole big t'ing.

Well my mother ended up comin' an' takin' meh. Well, I was glad because I didn' have to do all dis set o' work and I 'm glad.. Yeah. So when I leave an' come down where my mother stay...she livin' right by de road deh. Since Sanratcity..since dey had de ol'd houses down dere and dey move up here same time as Peter she livin' up here. An' I come an' I was livin' by she an' she de same t'ing too an' I jus' couldn' take dem on, yuh know. I...

J: What kind of education did you have about going out with guys? Did you learn anything about birth control or....

Comment: Rose is ignorant about sex, or even worse, she has been told lies about what happens during intercourse. When she does become sexually active she has fears founded on lies, and the real fears are a mystery that she will very soon realise.

R: No...I jus' find out everyt'ing de hard way, yes,..when I grow up it wasn' easy. It wasn' easy at all!

J: They used to say, 'Now you stay away from boys'.

R: Dem do a little maybe, but dey use' to say so would a' be good but dey use' to say .. it was bad t'ings dey use to be sayin'. It gets in all o' yuh and bustin' all o' yuh. Yuh can' grow up chil'ren so much. Chil'ren get afraid people when dey are so, yuh know. An' after she father get a place when I was 14.. yuh could say I was aroun' 15, he come now an' he get a place an' I does leave an' I end up goin' an' livin' wid him. Because I was not comfortable. I really was never comfortable aroun' dem and I does leave an' I end up livin' wid him. aroun' dat time 75/72 I on m' own.

J: Well, you were doing all the work for everybody else, it would have been easier?

R: Yes.

Comment: Rose does not give a very accurate time for when she moved away from home. The time period given is somewhere between age 12 and age 15. At this time she is being courted by an older man which brings her into conflict with her aunt and mother. Sexual awakening takes place against a backdrop of fears, threats and ignorance and in Rose's case she opts to move in with her boyfriend.

J: Did he support you as well or did you have to work?

R: No, I didn' use' to work. He use' to support me. Well after a while, we live for a few years good an' t'ing an' yuh know after a while when I reach an' I had sense I really didn' like he. It was because I was young, yuh know jus' so. I an' he, yuh know, we couldn' get along after a while an' I jus' leave him. De t'ings dat he would do...'have girlfriends an' t'ing bigger an' older dan me. An' I never use' to say nothin' .. I's a person I don' really like to t'ink. I jus' keep it up inside an' den I jus' .. yuh know, it build a kind o' hate.. An' I jus' leave he.

Comment: Male sharing is not uncommon in Trinidad and Rose tolerates it in the early stages of living with her boyfriend. However, she is getting to know more about her world and her own needs and now she has a baby making demands on her and she cannot make a decision to leave based exclusively on her own needs. She adopts a strategy for bettering her lot in life. By this time she has learnt to speak her will, to understand the politics of her sexuality in her social milieu and take a beating but she is growing in the kind of wisdom that a woman needs to for her survival. If she is going to improve her situation she needs to escape from her immediate situation. She determines to search for a 'better' man.

J: Did you leave to come here with Peter?

R: No. I leave, well I don' know Peter yet, an' I leave an' I end up by m' father livin'.

J: Where was he?

R: Belmont. An' we use' to always come back. She father when she was small he would come back for meh an' all dis kin' o' stupidness... I use' to go back after a while... go back, go back, go back...Den I get so fed up, eh an' t'ing. I say ..look, yuh see meh...not meh. I will get a place an' I go end up wid a next boyfriend. Well I will get a place and were stayin' by m'self in Morvant but she wan' aroun' me. He had her round by one of his sisters.

J: So where was his sister living?

R: In Diego Martin.

J: So you were in Morvant, she was in Diego Martin, your dad in Belmont, your mother in the Beetham and your aunt still up in the same place?

R: Well I by m'self uh. Well after a time when I get to know what character is and I get to have sense I didn' use to meddle wid dem. I didn' use' to meddle wid dem. I found I would say, well yuh see meh, I stay by m'self, rent a place and I will stay by m'self. I ain' workin'I had a boyfriend who did support me an' everyt'ing.

J: Is this when you got the little job cooking?

R: He use' to support meh. I didn' use to work. He uses to help meh. But after a while dis t'ing gettin' to me I find I can' live so, uh. I can' really live so, nuh. An' I went back wid he and went an' take she because her father .. I went an' take her uh. So I went an' take her. An' then she wid me up an' down an' he come, she father, come back in my life again. So I say look, yuh see meh, I don' want him in my life so I have to get somebody. So I an' Peter end up friendly an' den we come friendly and den wid dat I does leave de t'ing. I does leave he an' I end up goin' back by m' father. I stay dere an' from m' father I end up comin' here until now.

J: That is a long time now.

R: '79!

J: Yes, I remember coming down here and you had your little girl (Nadine) and you were having Sean. He is now 2 and a half or three?

R: December comin' he be 3.

J: And you were working at the service station.

R: Yeah, I was workin' dere but when I came pregnant wid de nex' one, I stop work.

Comment: Rose's pregnancies are accompanied by nausea and vomitting for the first trimester which would interfere with her working around petrol fumes.

J: So it is just three children you have?

R: Yeahs. No, I ain' had all m' chil'ren yet... I am makin' one right now but dat is de las'. (she laughs)

J: When is the next one due?

R: December. So when you make dis one you be finish'?

Comment: I am pregnant with my second child at the time of this conversation. Rose is a month ahead of me and we have been comparing notes. This has contributed to a sense of unity.

J: I think so, yes.

R: I know you does say so yes, but when dese t'ings happen it does have to remain so. Meh, when I get to know dat I was pregnant, I say, What! I get on. I say I was goin' to have an abortion but I settle' down. But I goin' to have to do somet'ing after dis one...

Comment: We see here that Rose considers abortion an option for dealing with an unplanned pregnancy. At the time, her partner was having difficulty providing for all his children and had stopped giving anything to his first child as she was 16 yrs and 'on her own'. It seemed that finding the money for his family was an endless pressure and yet the solutions offered by family planning were actively resisted and ultimately rejected. Another reason for rejecting the option of abortion may well have been the cost. Abortion is illegal in Trinidad but those who perform the procedure in breach of the law were asking high prices. Sandra mentioned that her doctor was charging $1000.

J: Have you been to family planning at all?

R: I afraid of family plannin'. I afraid de injection, de tablets, I afraid of dat too. Meh, I don' believe in de family plannin' know-how. Firs' I have a sister who was in it, an firs' she try de tablets an' it use' to make she sick. Den she end up takin' de injection. She didn' get on at all wid de injection. Well de doctor tell she to stop takin' de family plannin' an' stopped she from usin' anyth'ing from family plannin' but tell she all she wants is to use de coil. Dis coil!... But me, I ain' believe in dem t'ing yuh know.

Comment: Rose is drawing on actual experiences of women she knows among her peers here to judge the methods offered by family planning. The coil is also offered by family planning. However, Rose is skeptical and the reasons are not drawn entirely from experiences, but from heresay or interpretations and common fallacies in this community.

J: It is just as easy to use condoms or durex.

R: Durex..but I don' like Durex.

J: What about spermicides?

R: Yuh mean de spray....I aren' like dat.

J: Or there is the diaphragm? It is round like so and you put it in before with the spray. You can put it in a long time before. And you could take it out the next day.

R: I got to use somet'ing an' I intend to tie m' tubes yuh know but dat.. an' all I have.. Dat an' all is somet'ing else cause after all it would affec' yuh. An' a doctor dat I was seein' today, Dr. N. He was sayin' dat when dey tie yuh tubes it does cause a hemorrhage. Because when yuh ain' see yuh period it does like be a hemorrhage. When yuh tie yuh tubes. Because when yuh ain' see yuh period it does like be a hemorrhage...When yuh tie yuh tubes..dat is de end o' it uh. God didn' make yuh body for dem t'ings yes.

Comment: Rose is suggesting that a doctor gave her this idea that internal bleeding would be caused by a tubal ligation. It would seem unlikely or unseemly for a conventional doctor to offer this misinformation. However, it is obvious that Rose is convinced that interfering with natural processes is akin to opposing one's creator. There is concern about menstrual bleeding and a woman's health.

Other women were concerned with the idea that a woman's health was linked with menstrual bleeding. 'Yuh must see dat blood or yuh don' know what dat blood would be doin' . 'When yuh seein' dat blood yuh seein' yuh healt', when yuh aren' seein' dat blood yuh aren' seein' yuh healt' neither.'

It is also obvious that family limitation methods are *discussed in the circles of Rose's friends as she does know of the methods available even though she rejects them for herself. She appears to oppose any interference in the natural processes while she also plans on having control over her fertility. We did not discuss abstinence as a viable solution but I would hazard a guess that this would not be seen as any solution for Rose.*

J: It sounds like a diaphragm or another thing called a cap would be less drastic. That just fits over the neck of the womb. That's pretty easy.

R: But yuh can' get dose t'ings over here. Over here yuh can' get dem t'ing?

J: Yes. They wouldn't change you except that you wouldn't have any more babies...unless you wanted. Because it doesn't work unless it is there!

R: True. I will had to do somet'ing after dis because I ain' able to deal wid dat. Jus' to go on an' on makin' babies yuh know. Makin', makin', makin'...

Comment: The term used to refer to a pregnancy is an active term. Women 'make' babies which implies an active role rather than the passive language of 'being pregnant' or 'having a baby'. This language lends a centrality to the effort on the part of the woman bearing the child, indeed a centrality to the woman herself. A woman is said to 'make' a baby 'for' the father. A baby is a 'proof' positive of a love relationship.

J: Peter has got to mind his other children as well. Because the only one that is old enough is..

R: Aida 17..she about dat now.

J: And how many children does Jan have?

R: 3!

Comment: Jan is the mother of 3 children by Rose's partner. Pressure on her partner to provide for these children has been *alleviated since Jan found employment in a service station. There is constant friction over money to support children and Rose's partner is not always able to meet the moral obligation to support his children, while Rose is none too keen to see money going out when she has plans for her own children and plans for home improvements.*

J: And does Peter look after Nadine?

R: She father does mind her.

Comment: Nadine is living with Rose but she is financed by her own father. This often leads to tension as the common law partner is suspicious about how much of his money is being used to provide for another man's child. Similarly, if the outside father is seen to 'spoil' his child, it points up the inadequacy of the current provider. In every case, it is the woman who has to keep the balance.

J: Did you have any trouble with having babies?

R: No. I almos' had de las' one home. Dat was somet'ing else, what! My, my, and de way I was feelin' ordinary, really I didn' believe yes. When I sort of felt dis force I said, 'What!'...I had to get a car. By de time we reach up I make him. Peter didn' even reach home yet yuh know. Wid de other two I see signs, yuh know before I feel any pain or dat kin' o' t'ing an' I pass' blood an' t'ing so I know den. But de las' one, nothin'..

J: The water and the baby came at the same time?

R: Well when I reach' de hospital it burs'. Yes, dey usually does clip de water bag. But he...By de time I reach up an' I lie down an' my feet are up. well is water an' he comin' down at de same time.. Yes, he comin' after. All of dem born fas', everyone.

Comment: There is nothing coy or reserved about Rose when she speaks about the birthing of her babies. She prides herself *for being able to cope easily with this pain. She recollects that the only real pain experienced was during the epiziotomy where the flesh is cut to prevent tearing when the baby's head is delivered.*

J: Some people go for hours and hours and have a lot of pain. Did you have much pain?

R: No. De onlies' time is when de baby about to born yuh get de hot, hot pain an' dey cut yuh skin...Well dat de onlies' time. Until dem about born I never see a pain. Yuh see, I does always move about an' t'ing. I didn' really , yuh know, feel dat. I keep movin' about an' I don' really sit down so.

Comment: Rose connects being active with being fit and healthy. Her home is clean and tidy even though her partner is currently extending the room that we are sitting in, the 3 children in the home are under 5 yrs and Rose is experiencing fatigue with her pregnancy.

J: So what sort of things do you do each day?

R: Well Peter goes to work at after 6.00 or 7.00. As long as I am feelin' well, I usually would get up an' make tea an' t'ing and den I have to clean out, wash yuh know, an' turn around an' t'ing. I wouldn' really sit down so I walk... Yes walk an' t'ing. Sometimes I does walk get up an' go round ... I have dis friend in..umh..around 4th Street or.. Dat is why I doesn' really... unless I feel sick, yuh know, I doesn' really lie down. I does move about an' do my work.

J: Do you get sick with your pregnancies?

R: Sick, sickness..uh what! Wid' he ,dis one (points to Sean) I vomit, vomit, vomit...was somet'ing else. I use' to vomit right t'rough. Belly pains, plenty belly pains and back pain, yes, wid he. De nex' one, well I use' to vomit wid him but I never really use to feel so sick. But dis one, I does feel sick plenty sometimes. De onliest t'ing now, I 'does jus' feel tired. I can' stand up too long an' t'ing, yuh know.

J: Has your baby started to move yet?

R: Yes, I does feel it. Dis month was four months.

J: Your sister...She has got children too?

R: Yes, t'ree boys an' two girls. She older dan me. She is de bigges'. She ain' born here neither. She is de bigges'.

J: And what do you think of Grenada now that it has a change of government?

R: Well I never really live dere so I doesn' think about dere. I don' know not'ing about dere.

Comment: Even though Rose was born in Grenada she shows little interest in the events that are happening in Grenada under Maurice Bishop. News of the 'People's Revolution' in Grenada was regularly featured in the daily papers and union members rarely failed to include Grenada's experiment in their speeches but Rose's world is far removed from the place of her birth. Her focus is on the domestic front and seeking a denomination to channel her religious beliefs.

This question of mine comes out of an assumption that because I have moved from a particular context, across cultural terrains and strived to appreciate different perspectives, then someone living on a small island would be conscious of a world out there. But this is patently not the case among the urban poor, even among those who were born on other Caribbean islands as in Rose's case.

J: Independence was only a year or so after you were born and so it has been Eric Williams or George Chambers ever since you can remember. When you went to school did your parents have to pay?

R: It was free.

J: Did you have to pay for buses or transport?

R: What!.. We use' to have to walk.. Yuh know dem long time people, some o' dem.. Yes, we use' to have to walk. Walk from home to school an' walk back. I don' really know how far it was.. Well let me see. It was from about here to...it was a good way yes. We use' to have to walk a good way. Like from here to say, Port-of-Spain yuh could say almos'..an' it was hill yuh know. It was a good way.

J: You must have been pretty fit... That is probably what prepared you for the babies? If you had passed the Common Entrance what would you have done?

R: Well, to be trut'ful eh, I does always say if I had de opportunity an' t'ing I would rather have been a police or somet'ing. I always use' to say so yuh know, when I was growin' up, always. Up to now, because right now in places dey are givin' courses in school leavin'. Yes, so dis year I was to really go an' start to go to night class an' t'ing but wid dis baby I put it off to nex' year while I am still young. I will go an' look at school leavin' an' yuh know, see if I could...

J: You are tall enough and you have had a lot of experience.

R: Yes. I will try.. I always have dat in mind yuh know. I always say if it is on your mind eh, if you put yuh mind to it you suppose' 'to get t'rough. So I will do dat because I ain' interested in jus' sittin' down in de home and t'ing.

J: With the children and with Peter having to spread his money so far around it might be an idea. You might become the one who earns the money. And how long does it take to become a policewoman?

R: I really ain' know how long but every year dey ask people to come an' register who' interested in de force, yuh know. Well, I believe when yuh go in yuh does have to go an' get trainin' an' t'ing and den to graduate and den to come out an' yuh know... I doubt you does have to wait long man.

J: I think you get paid while you are training, don't you?

R: I don' know...I really don' know.

J: Is there anywhere where you could get that information?

R: I have friends workin'...school friends workin' in de police force.

J: They told you about it?

R: No.. m' own mind.

J: It is a very responsible job.

R: It is true, but I rather dat. I rather dat and dey does take yuh from 19 to 35..Dey take in, yes.

Comment: While I was talking to Rose it was difficult to realize that she was still in her early twenties as she seemed to have a world of experiences already behind her. It was only when she began to talk about her friends in the police force and the age of intake for training in the force that I calculated that Rose would be eligible for another 12 years. Here was a chance to break with dependence on her partner and the mould of restricted options because of her dependence.

Rose had consciously sort her current partner as someone who would care for her and her children. Now that she is older, she is exploring another strategy for coping. She is looking at the new career options as opposed to the [illegible] *ing capacity of her partner.*

J: What about your sisters, do they work?

R: No..dem doesn' work. I have 6, some born here an' dey livin' here and livin' away. yes. One married. Dey mix' up. Well, to be trut'ful, I don' much care what dem does do. I close to de big one an' a nex' one too, but she livin' Picton side. So we does move good. De others are younger dan me.

Comment: Rose does not give the impression that she is close to her family or that she is even willing to spend her energy making bridges into the lives of her kin. She is spending her time bringing up her own children and she gives some thought as to why it might be that her own mother did not care for her. This shows an example of Rose's sensitivity and a hunch about the reasons for her mother's lack in the area of 'maternal instinct'.

J: Did your mother bring them up or did they go to other family.

R: No. She never grow dey up. She have two small ones by she, a boy an' a girl 10 an' 11 years...de boy is about 9... But she have dem two wid her. But de res', she never grow dey up, never.

J: Was she young when she started having children.

R: Yes she was, yes. She was young but even without she was young, now dat she reach big an' ol' den, well you see it friends an' dem grow up de way m' mother use to train her chil'ren she don' really... I don' know why nuh. I don' know if it [illegible] [illegible] her mother died when she was 3 yrs old or 2 yrs. She mother died so she never really grow wid she mother. I don' know if it was t'rough dat?

J: Were you really young when you went to live with your aunt?

Comment: Rose's mother lived in a slum where conditions for rearing children were deplorably unsanitary. We learn that Rose was the second child for her mother and there were more to follow. The name 'Ratcity' or 'San Ratcity' would indicate that the neighbourhood was hardly the pride of the city. In fact, The Beetham Housing Estate was created to relocate this community of slum dwellers not only for the benefit of the poor, but for the health of the nation as diseases that flourish among the poor tended to spread beyond the perimeter of slum dwellings. The slum was a breeding ground for pestilence of every kind.

R: I was about 3 yrs when my aunt take meh. Because she had, yuh know, when she come wid meh, she was livin' down in Ratcity. Dat was when dey had dem ol' shacks...dat was before dey move'.. An' den, well my aunt take meh an' so I end up growin' wid meh aunt, although she wasn' takin' care o' me.

J: Was she trying to work?

R: Well yes...she use' to work an' t'ing but it was meh dat use' 'to work for she. She was somet'ing else man.

J: And do you get on well with her now?

R: Well, I an' she doesn' get on at all yuh know. She is somet'ing else man. We don' get along. If I does need anyt'ing she doesn' come, 'is mama (Hester) dat does come down. Or Peter does stay home an help meh. An' she livin' right dere, right in de same street. Yeahs. So I does tell she plain. I say, You don' like meh yuh know anybody would say so. No, you don' like me So I doesn'... I doesn' really study she because I doesn'

Comment: Rose finds it difficult to accept that her mother simply does not care for her. She mentions here that even though her mother lives around the corner from her now, there is [illegible] *point in her life, Rose's mother has younger children to look after and for these children she is remaining in the home to care for them. This is a source of considerable resentment and bitterness for Rose who did not have her mother as caretaker in her youth. Rose has found that she has to rely on her partner's family and her partner in particular when she needs help.*

R: It is mama dat comes and does be up an' down... Like Peter does stay home, yuh know an' help meh an' she (Rose's mother) livin' right dere. Right in de same street. So I does tell she plain... I say, " well yuh really don' like meh yuh know. Anyone would say so. Yes! Yuh don' like meh." An' I does jus' stay by m'self wid dem.. Yuh see meh, I would rather stay by my friends an' dem... an' as dey grow up I will show dem right. I don' wan' dem to grow up as I grow up at all.

Comment: This disillusionment with her own mother has influenced her decisions about her own role and the functions performed as 'mother' to her own children. She wants to be close to her children and care for them in a way that she was not cared for.

R: I don' want dem to grow up as how I grow up...

Comment: Rose starts out as a Roman Catholic and changes over to the Baptist faith. However, since being baptized she has been rejected by her baptist friends for moving in with the former common law partner of another baptist woman (who was Rose's constant friend up to this point). The baptist women colluded to make Rose's actions the subject of their scorn. So we have here some collective action among women to censor the actions of another woman in the name of an order ordained beyond the realm of the street or neighbourhood. This vanguard for 'God' acted as though their means were justified by their righteousness.

J: What religion are you?

R: Catholic.. Well when I say I was a catholic,... well a good while now I come baptized in Baptist but I don' really follow up wid dey. Yeah, I does baptize. Well, I fall out wid dey. I ain' ready wid dem Baptists an' dem nuh.

J: What made you fall out with them?

R: I aren' really fall out wid dem but I ain' able wid dem man. Dis Baptist t'ing...Dey too evil. I does baptize in Baptist but I doesn' really follow de church yuh know. I doesn' really follow dem up. Sometimes I does go to de church Pentecost'... sometimes I goes to pentecost but m' neighbours an' dem dere....

Comment: Mena and Tara are neighbours who attend the Pentecostal Church. They too were brought up in the Catholic faith in the convent. Before going into the convent they were Hindu, so there is a fluidity here that would seem unique to Trinidad's multi-cultural landscape.

J: Pastor Duncan is a very big name in that church?

R: Well once I went in dat church... Pastor Duncan, once I went up dere, Curepe side.

J: He is a healer, so did you go with somebody who was sick?

Comment: Pastor Duncan holds healing services where the sick or their relatives pay for the Spiritual prowess and ritualistic performance of this preacher. Such interventions do not come without considerable financial sacrifice. And the pastor is conversant in the many causes attributed to these afflictions and manages to prosper in this environment.

R: No, I jus' went to de church.. to de church.

J: A lot of people go because they prefer the singing and the movement.

R: Yeah, the singin'...I like to hear dem. It does be real nice.

J: The Catholics are a bit quiet?

R: Well I confirm an' make my first communion wid catholic..

J: You went to an R.C. school didn't you?

R: Yeahs.. after a while I didn' really follow. I rather come wid de pentecosts because I find.. yuh know, I like pentecosts. I rather dere. Well look, right now it have a lady.. I don' know if yuh ever hear of de Jehovah Witness Church? .. Well it have a lady dat come here an' t'ing an' study de bible, deir bible, wid meh. Yuh know, but she now want meh to come an' join dem too. De Witness church but I don' know for m' self eh, but I can' really see m' self enjoinin' it but she does come every week yuh know. An' it have a whole set of magazine an' I doesn' even read dem. From de same Jehovah Witness Church an' she does come an' study bible wid meh because deir bible is different entirely! Yes, an' dey does come every week. She come to carry meh to church, but every time she come I does tell she dat I ain' feelin' good or t'ing yuh know. An' I really mus' be feelin' well... I say look, I really not to go to dat church in trut' nuh, nuh. But Peter does tell meh I mus' go a day an' see how it is, but I ain' know.

J: What does Peter study?

R: Nothin'.

J: He is wantin' yuh..

R: To take his over..(laughs) Meh an' dis Jehovah Witness church, meh? I rather de pentecosts an' too ~~I~~ find no fault wid other churches. Yuh see meh, I don' really condemn no religion an' t'ing eh, but some o' dem really ain' trut'. Dey does, yuh know, does do different t'ings. I prefer de, umh, pentecosts...

Comment: Rose is very tolerant of different Christian denominations. It is important to her to have some affiliation with a Church and from what she says, this is for all the family. Her partner is encouraging her to try the Jehovah's Witness group because the woman evangelist has taken the trouble to call often. Rose seems to be favouring the Pentecostal Church. This is the church attended by her next door neighbours (who are still helpful to Rose and the only members of the street that she speaks to after problems with Baptist neighbours). However, when we hear Rose speaking about her neighbour on the other side we might suspect that there is another belief structure alive and well in this community.

J: And are you still having trouble with your next door neighbour?

R: What. dat witch! Dat witch!

J: She is still harassing you?

R; What! She real torturous now. I don' take she on, nuh. I don' take she on.

Comment: The neighbour is provoking Rose with various designs associated with obeah. But Rose is ignoring these things and thus, not 'taking them on'. She is not engaging in this war. But neighbours assured me that it is commonly assumed that Rose also practices obeah. One thing is certain, everyone is conversant in the symbol system of obeah and few people would be immune from the power of the meanings intended by its practice.

J: Didn't she have a car parked outside here?

R: No, she had no car parked. She had it park-up.

J: And she is still burning things?

R: Yes she always burnin' t'ings. Dat is why I ain' have dem baptist an' t'ing... dey too wicked. 'Cause she's a baptist too. The majority o' dem on dis street is baptists, uh. I mean, dey hate meh.. Dey don' really mix wid me in deir pot. From de time I come here I go t'rough a time of my life where everybody use' to be aroun' here. It is God dat did stayed wid me. dat is why I does be still here. Yeah, dey ain' easy. T'ink about torment.. dey start on m' daughter. Dey spit on she, all kin' o' t'ing dey sayin' yes. 'Roun' here dey ain' easy no. A time dey spit on m' daughter.. Some girls in dat house so. Dey spit on she, I mean, even so, I disgusted but I does leave dem so man. I jus' leave dem. Dey use to pelt m' wid water and' t'row ....Dey use' to be interferin' wid me when I pass in de road. An' I come an' I say, look yuh see meh, I end up goin' to de station. Police come an' warn dem.

J: What reasons did they have for harassing you?

R: No reasons but I livin' here. Is how I livin' here, dat is why. Yes..Because now, Jan...

J: Hasn't she turned Baptist?

R: She was always a baptist as far as I hear...because she mourn[408] an' all kin' t'ing in St Vincent. She were always one. She somet'ing else.

J: So they all sided with her to get you out?

R: Yes, dey side wid she. Dey use' to side wid she to torment meh. But, it real torment I go t'rough yes. She come 'roun' everyday to call out Peter. Well, he an' all is somet'ing, 'cause he use' to go. When she come an' she call an' he gone out I use' to real feel funny. I stay an' I bear dat , for yuh see meh, if I have to stay here, I will remain right here!

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[408] Mourning is a Baptist ritual where bands are worn for up to 3 weeks. The purpose is to induce dreams and visions to reveal the stage of spiritual progress or rank. There are about 22 ranks with obligations and duties associated with them. Mourning is also used to combat obeah and evil forces that bring about illness and misfortune. See Stephen Glazier: Marchin' The Pilgrims Home: Leadership and Decision-Making in an Afro-Caribbean Faith.1983.

Comment: Rose ascertains that she has to stand 'her ground' if she is going to remain in the house and see that the other woman is kept from making any return. This is not without violence and it is a time for testing Rose's resilience and ability to survive in a very hostile neighbourhood where she is defined as the interloper. This is not a love story. it is a well planned strategy for Rose who has set herself the task of finding a better provider. She has also planned to be that mother, that her mother never was for her.

J: Did she wait for you on the road?

R: Wait for meh on de road!!! Yuh know how much time she use' to stand up on de road an' interfere wid meh. My! she are a real puzzle.

J: What about when you were working at the gas station?

R: Yes..When I was workin' at de gas station an' t'ing she use' to stand up dere, but she does usually watch an' t'ing. Well, she use' to come down here an' call out an' she call out Peter an' Peter gone out. I didn' use to say nothin'. If I have to tell him anyt'ing I tell him when she gone. an' when I tell him anyt'ing now he start up on me an' is how it use' to go. Dat was somet'ing else, oui. Dat was real torment. Yeah... All somet'ing else, torment with no end it look like and still it turned out good, yes.

Comment: Rose believes that she has weathered the storm that accompanied her when she took up residence in the Beetham.

She felt that God was truly on her side as she endured against her Baptist neighbours and former friends (who were equally convinced that this same supernatural personage was their ally in this righteous struggle). Rose sees her survival as a sign of God defeating (D)evil. Now she is proud to point out that her partner is putting on extensions to their house. All this is taking place without consultation with the National Housing Authority as the government has regulations that are seen as obstacles rather than guidelines.

J: And you have put on these rooms?

R: Since December mont'..December yes, December Peter t'ing up here.

J: So he has really learnt somet'ing working for works.

R: He learnt somet'ing yes.

J: Does National Housing know.

R: He do it by himself.

J: He was saying that National Housing makes so many rules and regulations so he didn't worry with them.

R: Yuh see, everybody addin' on on dey place. Yuh could afford to add on yuh place...yeah, yuh could add on.

J: Is that going to take up all your space or have you got space at the back?

R: No, it have space at de back. Yeah, it have water, pipe.

J: I meant, that out the front you have water flooding the road, is it like that at the back?

Comment: The front street is quite water-logged with brackish water. The car could not be driven on this street at all and a green slime-like plant grew in the water along with mosquitoes and other insects. This waterway was deep enough to pose as a health hazard for young children and the stench was particularly pungent. There was a similar watercourse further down in the Beetham where a member of the village council explained that they could hardly complain about the water because community members had found 'other uses' for *the fill that was assigned to the road. Rose's partner made similar comments about the problems in their street. However, it does seem strange that government engineers would continue with construction of houses and roads without calculating that these facilities would end up below the water-table. (The Beetham is built on land recovered from the Caroni Swamp.) Where Rose and her family live the block is sodden in the wet season and only partially dry in the dry season.*

R: Nuh, it does be dry but when I wash down it does be wet. But otherwise, as long as de sun shinin' it does be dry. But yet still de whole yard wants castin' over.

J: You can't grow anything then except in pots.

R: Well ummh..we have to put on a next bedroom in de back sometime, maybe next year.

J: So you are going to make this a bedroom here?

R: Well he openin' de drawin' room.

J: So he is going to take this wall out?

R: I would rather a dinin' room an' a drawin' room.

J: So put in another wall?

R: No jus' leavin' it so an' carryin' it back, yuh know.

J: He will have to take the power[409] and put it on the other wall.

R: Well, I believe he leavin' ...yuh see where de fancy brick is, I believe he leavin' dat. He jus' t'ingin' from where de windows come down, yeah.

Comment: Rose is not concerned about the location of the electrical fuse box. And I had assumed that the extensions her partner was working on were for extra bedroom space as the sleeping area was so limited. (There are two small bedrooms for 2 adults and 3, soon to be 4 children.) We learn that Rose is wanting more space for dining and living room before adding to the sleeping areas.

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[409] Electricity meter and fuse box.

Rose is very proud of her children. During the conversation these little ones have been very quiet in the background under their grandmother's supervision but now they have come to sit with us. There has been much gossip about the paternity of these children and we will learn that her partner's father has sided with the former woman and her Baptist colleagues to discredit Rose and cast suspicion on her fidelity to Peter.

Rose has learnt about my profession from her 'mother-in-law' and appears to want her hunches regarding the intelligence of her eldest son confirmed.

R: He (Sean) really feel he is a big man yuh know. What! He real ha' sense uh. Sean real intelligent for he age I fin'.

J: I find that he is very like Peter in the face.

R: He jus' like Peter.. no joke yuh know.

Comment: We learn that one of the things that is being used to promote suspicion about Rose's character is rumours about infidelity and the paternity of her children. In this area comments about children bearing a resemblance to the reputed father are welcomed and comments to the contrary are extremely volatile. When a woman is dependent on a man financially for the care of herself and her children it would be disastrous to weave doubts about loyalty and paternity in the mind of her breadwinner. While it is common for men to have outside children, it is not healthy for a woman to bear a child to an outside male if she wishes to continue as a resident in another man's home.

H: An' still dem people do say dat dem chil'ren ain' Peter own. Yes, dey do say dat.

R: An' de nex' one dat you see dere, well worse yet. He jus' like Peter an' yuh see how Peter like him. He's somet'ing else.

J: They say that to harass you?

R: It don' worry meh. It don' worry me because I know he jus' like Peter. I don' really take on dem t'ings so.

J: Is Mable as bad as she was?

7

R: She could change? Dat witch!

Comment: Rose's feud with Baptist neighbours on one side has escalated to the point where police have been called to warn off those who have given cause for concern. However, one neighbour has actually pelted Rose with stones. The police were called in and charges laid after police escorted Rose to the general hospital for a medical report on injuries sustained during the assault on her house and person.

J: Is she still taking you to court, or you taking her to court?

R: Well no, but since dey mash up de place... Yuh hear how she son mash up here, yes. An' pelt a big stone an' hit me. Well de case goin' on still. An' de case was to call in nex' month. De 30th o' nex' month de case suppose to call. Well since de case call up de case call 5 times a'ready. An' de police NEVER come t' court. Never come t' court. An' when yuh see dat...(Rose rubs her fingers together to indicate that money has been paid to the police to throw out the case). Well Monday? Tuesday or Monday Peter went to de commissioner to see dat Burroughs... Dey say well he could go an' see de actin' commissioner because Burroughs was not to see unless you're comin' to bring news about some raid or somet'ing, well den. He say he went to de actin' commissioner, he ring up Besson Street where de police station in an' it dere Peter was to go yesterday. So yesterday mornin' Peter carried a paper with the amount of times de case called an' de man tell de police, well why yuh ain' goin' t' court. He say he forget. Well de superintendent went an' tell him how Peter went to de actin' commissioner an' de actin' commissioner tell dere dat he sup-posed to go t' court. Peter say his face become long, long, long.. he vex yes. Peter say well de man tell him , well he have to go t' court dis hearin'.

Comment: The general tone of the interjections from Rose's 'mother-in-law' would indicate that justice does not depend on the merits of the case but the morals of its enforcers. In this case we learn that there have been : a.delays in hearing the case, b. visits to the acting commissioner for this minor offence, c. insinuations of bribery and corruption on the part of the police officer, d. at least 2 police officers involved in the case and a none too subtle hint that race is partly to blame for the delay as the policeman to appear in court is East indian.

H: He will come an' he will tell a pack a' lies.

R: Lies? I don' care what he says, as long as he comes. What! Well nex' t'ing yuh know he ain' comin' to court but he tellin' Peter, 'Oh, I thought de case t'row out'...He hear de case t'row out. I say, well how he know de case t'row out if he don' really go, uh? How yuh know de case t'row out an' yuh ain' comin' to court? So den yuh really take money in trut'. So me ain' come an' tell yuh de case t'row out. I here to tell yuh yuh have t' come t' court. Peter tell him dat if he ain' come to court, he goin' to see Burroughs dis time. So I ain' know really. De man tell he to come back dis week, a week before de case.

H: He wicked an' bad.

R: He too terrible. Look how de man wasn' even tellin' 'Well God boy'..well how you could do a t'ing like dat an' say yuh forget... all dem times yuh forget?

H: He don' forget at all!

R: ~~Yes,~~ is money he gets.

J: Have you got a lawyer?

R: No.

J: Have you gone to legal aid?

R: No. Well dey say dat, umh de police an' dem what say dat we don' need a lawyer for it really a police case. So yuh see, dat is why without de police it ain' have no case. Because de way dat happen is a police case. If yuh say well I did bring him up well den I would had to get a lawyer. But as much as police case.. Police take all de evidence yuh know an' as long as de police stan' up in case an' say, well yes, so an' so dat is all de magistrate an' dem wants.

H: Dey will tell a pack o' lies, a set o' lies!!!!

J: They should have a record, they should have all the particulars.. Have you got a copy of that?

R: No. Well yuh see, when de t'ing happen dey take a statement yuh know so he suppose to have all dat write down. de night when it happen' an' so I really don' know what he doin' uh?

J: Did you go to a doctor about the injury?

R: Yeah, de night when it happen, well de police an' dem have all de papers because dey carry me to hospital an' de doctor examine me. Well he give dem de paper in Besson Street.

J: So you have the doctor as witness too?

R: Well de doctor .. Well yes, if de police would have come to court, by now it would have finish'. Because de doctor full out de form right an' give em it... An' yet still...

H: Somet'ing goin' on.

J: You have the doctor's evidence, you have your statement...

R: An' den too when dey come in de night, same night it happened. Dey come an' meet he red handed. Yeah, dey come an' meet dem here. Meet him sayin' about all of dem wanted to run. A police say he goin' to shoot him.. a black one. I sorry he ain' have de case. Because de night when we went roun' Besson Street dat black police say yuh lucky yuh know. Yuh real lucky I sayin' so everyday. But I didn' know dis Indian one was takin' too yes. It was dis Indian one what had de case. If it had been de nex' fella dat would have done.

H: So long!

R: A Indian one what had de case an' t'ing. He somet'ing else. (calls her daughter who is speaking to a neighbour) Dey does be de only people dat I an' dem does get along wid.. de Indian people on dat side. Dem is pentecost.

J: I am surprised that these people are using Baptist to harass you?

R: They ain' easy...Maybe too, as seein' how I baptize. From de time I baptize is how torment start wid dese people aroun' here. Yeah, an' how cause she an' dem was frien'. All roun' here was friends. I ain' takin' dem on now yuh see meh.

Comment: Women in the street have not only a belief system in common but they are using the moral imperatives of their church to legitimize their relationship claims in their common law unions. This alliance has been particularly strong in its opposition to Rose 'usurping' Jan's position.

Fundamentalist churches and sects insist on the sinfulness of 'fornication' and recognize marriage as the only *place for sanctioned sexual involvement. The bible is the authority for this decision.*

J: But isn't Jan living with someone else now?

R: Now she stop. She don' really come down here so again. Like how she workin' too, she workin' . She workin' in some gas station on de main road side. Dat mus' be why she doesn' have time. I don' worry wid she nuh. Well since Peter an' I was friendin' an' t'ing yuh know, I never use' to take she on. I never use' to really take she on because it had a night she cussed Peter down in de main street an' de t'ings she tell him...I don' know how dat woman really lived because he always does say so..He would a' never lived wid she again. Yes. He use' to tell she to go, ' til a time when he was sayin' he was leavin' she here. But it so happen dat she end up goin'.

Comment: When Rose is really vexed with her partner's dealings with his former companion she plays her trump card and suggests that her partner is treating his former companion with the respect due to his mother. A man's mother could cross words with her son in public perhaps, but any other woman would risk a violent scene for this. People live too close together to disguise their moods for the public. The gap between a public sphere and a private sphere is absent when a domestic dispute is drawn out of the house and into the street. And violence is no stranger to these parts.

R: Peter does say how he fed up wid she...How she could get on. Big mouth, dat is joke, she is somet'in else. She use' to come roun' here an' call out Peter an' get on. An' I use' to say now wait,dat yuh mother? Yeah, I use' to say is dat yuh mother, hear how she callin' yuh out an' gettin' on. I don' t'ink she call out Peter. She is somet'ing else!

J: And what about John Lang and the machine, has he issued the paper yet?

Comment: *Rose and her partner have had some difficulty with her 'father-in-law' over his treatment of Rose and more recently, over the destruction of his shoe making equipment. It was rumoured that this matter would go to court.*

R: Dat next witch.

J: You are surrounded by them it seems?

R: He is a nex' witch by heself yuh know. Dat man hates meh...He use' to stay here. Well mama, yuh don' see how I does talk but he is a nex' witch by heself yuh know. Dat man hates meh. He is somet'ing else yuh know. An' it had times when he use' to start so I use' to stay out dere so. An' when he doin' shoemaker work an' t'ing dat man use' to stay readin' psalms an' t'ing. Psalms! He does talk yuh know, but he doesn' care what he does do. He use to say he readin' psalm in de evenin'... all night he use' to be wid a candle an' a big bible outside dere readin'.. I use' to laugh. I use' to say Peter, look what your father doin'? I say, well yuh see dat, I say all dat good turn back on him. I does be hopin' it would turn back so he does behave yuh know. Yuh see, because I ain' do nothin' (interruption for the children) Me ain' do nothin' yuh know. No, an. Dey get me real vex', trut'..An' look her mout'.

J: How old is Aloe?

R: (Counts on her fingers saying the months aloud) A year an' four mont's. He somet'ing else.

J: So John Lang, when he was livin' here he was always saying that he was going to bring you up?

R: Yes, poor me, poor me and it is not me yuh know.

H: Yes, he always use' to be sayin' dat.

R: Yes, I know an' it Peter what t'ing his machine yuh know.

H: An' he say I does tell Peter to t'row it away.

R: He real evil yes, he real evil..

J: Didn't he leave it outside in the rain?

R: Yes, he leave it in de rain. Yeah...Peter tell him, come for it. He wouldn' come for it. He say when he ready wid he chamois if anyt'ing happen to his machine an' t'ing he go bring up Peter, dat what he tell Peter a time. Yeah and when Peter see dat it rotten an' so Peter say he go t'row it out because it aren' good. Peter put it outside, eh, eh, man!

J: He didn't bring you up in court?

H: He aren' do one t'ing. People must be cryin' shame on him so he aren' worry..

R: Johnny is a witch.

Comment: Rose's 'father-in-law' is now living with a younger woman who has to cope with his ways including his attitudes which translate into violence when dealing with his female companion.

This man is always ready with a theory on anything happening in government circles. He sees conspiracies brewing and graft and corruption everywhere. However, he is not alone in this as it is common for people to volunteer information about what might be happening behind the scenes.

We will learn that this 'father-in-law' has a conspiracy theory tailored for Rose. He wagers the respect afforded to a father against the bond that exists between his son and his new companion from his position within the house. At *this time he has been evicted from the land he squattered on for more than a decade and he has taken the legal owner to court over this matter (borrowing money from his son to cover legal costs by giving his son to believe that this case would be decided in his favour). The case goes against the 'father-in-law' and so he is evicted from his son's home. He does not go quietly but throws blame on his estranged wife (accusing her of whoring and failing to educate his children) and on Rose for using Shango/Obeah (Witchcraft) to turn against him.*

H: He does give dat lady trouble down dere, what!

R: When I was makin' Sean dat man stand up in front o' me, dat man de last, eh. Dat man stand up in front o' me an' tellin' me he go beat meh wid a knife. Jus' one mornin' tellin' me he go beat meh, yeah an' how Sean goin' to be demon chil'...Yes, a devil chil'.

J: What was his reason for that?

R: Well he, ..after, well he come here eh, I was goin' good an' t'ing. Jan use' to come aroun' here. An' all of a sudden, he an' Jan become good, good friends 'til a mornin' he tellin' she t' come in in here so Cheryl (her partner's daughter) could sit down an' sleep in here. Well I shock. He wake up an' den she come for dem so Peter say. Well leave de chil' in here til he come home because Neil have some cold. Because he say he could buy some medicine an' t'ing to rub him down now. Dis man was tellin' she. Dis man was tellin' she 'come in in here for de chil'ren an' sit down here so, eh. An' I watchin' he so if she only come in inside o' here I says, I say one o' we will go out dead. But she ain' come in she stay outside an' t'ing but she always use to come an' look for him uh. She always use' to come an' look for him after a while. An' he did hate she so much yuh know. Yeah, he did hate she ..well he use' to talk about she. Well I shock' to see two of dem as friend. I see two o' dem..well, two o' dem was from St Vincent so yuh have to expec' dat. I don' take him on.

Comment: John Lang holds the view that women are a burden and that his son is a victim of Rose's designs on him. He felt that Rose had done something supernatural to evict his grandchildren and their mother and move in with another man's child. The pregnant Rose represents a power play for his son's already stretched resources. This is not a love story this is women's treachery and an evil manifestation.

John Lang sides with the other woman who was born in St.Vincent like himself and he makes his Christianity visible to side with the Baptists who are keen to see Rose evicted.

H: How he even say dat dese two chil'ren is not he grandchil'ren. He say, yuh could say dey belongin's to yuh but he say only Cheryl an' dem is he grandchil'ren.

R: He would tell me so. Yes, all kin'...He tell Peter dat too yuh know. It had a time, in front o' me, he tell Peter how he could have time to make chil'ren wid me, yeah. An' I didn' use' to forget an' I use' to push past him after dat. Well I...

Yuh see I would put food for he an' he would see de food an' t'row away de food outside. All dat he use' to do yuh know. I say look here, yuh see dis t'ing, I can' take dis kin' a t'ing. Now boy, I tell Peter..I tellin' Peter an' Peter ain' sayin' nothin'. I say, yuh see dat, after I tell he an' I say an' yuh father ain' livin' here an' so I ain' bound to do dat yuh know. I say, I livin' wid you an' I cook an' I say yuh father stayin' here an' I didn' really eat in front o' him. Well I say I puttin' food in front o' him, he ain' eatin' he food. Sometimes he might eat a piece o' food an' t'row away all de res' outside. I say, I can' be puttin' up wid dat all de time.

I tell m' mother an' dem what 'goin' on. I say, I ain' givin' him no food yuh know.. because he ain' eatin' it. Dey say, Gi' him, gi' him, dat Peter father, gi' him. So I put de food out dere. He leave it. When Peter come home I say, yuh see I cook your father all he food an' he ain' eat it.

So I hear Peter sayin' 'Yuh don' want meh food so yuh don' want nothin' from meh.' So I say, all right an' he say, all right. So when Peter startin off, he leavin' half he food. So he ain' eatin' it, he givin' he father half. He was eatin food. He say I givin' Peter nastiness but he eatin' food. When Peter was takin' off he say, yuh see dis t'ing I can' really take on dis t'ing....

When Peter tell him well dat man start to get on. 'Chil' yuh stupid!' An' he start to carry on until well we could not take no more an' Peter tell he to go. Well he was real torturous, yes!

(Peter arrives home from work)

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PHOEBE ALVAREZ

Personal Information

Age: 37 years
Year of Birth: 1946.
Address: c/- Grandmother, Pensioners Qtrs, BHE.
Childcaregiver: Phoebe was reared by her aunt (mother's sister) as her mother died when Phoebe was 5 months old.
Education: Phoebe attended primary school but had to leave to look after her aunt (who died when Phoebe was 15 years).
Unions: Phoebe has had a series of common law unions but at the time of this conversation she only had a visiting relationship. Phoebe does not comment on this herself, but neighbours mentioned that Phoebe and her 'man friend' were given to frequent arguments characterized by violence and abusive language at a volume that left nobody in any doubt about the words exchanged. Her 'man friend' is from Moruga.
Number of children: Phoebe has had 2 children but both died.
Mother: Number of children: 1 (Phoebe)
Father: Number of children: 7 brothers, 3 sisters + P = 11
Father and Stepmother and siblings: St Thomas, Virgin Islands, USA. Phoebe has no family in Trinidad.
Housing: Phoebe is residing with her grandmother in the pensioners' quarters of the Beetham Housing Estate.
Occupations: Phoebe has been a domestic, waitress, bar attendant, cashier, sales clerk and gambling parlour attendant. Now she is making handicrafts.
Other skills: cake decorating, knitting, sewing.
Financial support: Phoebe is living off her grandmother's pension and the income from selling handicrafts.
Emotional support: Phoebe has a girlfriend in Elizabeth but she prefers to drink and keep in the company of men. She feels that she is essentially alone in the world.
Support in crisis: When Phoebe moved from Marabella to Moruga she went by a girlfriend in Moruga.
Religion: Roman Catholic (rastafarian?)

Introductory Comments

Phoebe impressed as being a rather formidable person in that she had what I call a *tough* image that acted as a psychological shield. Initially she acted as though she was tired and not completely alert. When she deposited her large body onto the little chair that Compton had provided, I was not sure that it was wise. (We exchanged chairs) She emphasized her weight and bulk by blowing and heaving as she literally crashed down on the seat.

Phoebe seemed to be making something of an effort to get around and even a very short walk in the sun had left her short of breath. The heavy breathing I took as a nonverbal way of saying - 'Well, ah here now but I ain' really know if ah ready jus' yet. Wait til ah

cool off.' It felt as though she was using this time to observe me and get herself oriented before anything was asked of her. She did not want to give any ground in her manner of relating until she had established control of the situation and of herself. It appeared to me, that for Phoebe
any encounter with a stranger involved getting prepared to take them on.

Phoebe linked control of situations with respect and if she looked somewhat overbearing, her manner reinforced this general impression. Her arms folded and he legs crossed at the ankles and held wide apart at the knee, she looked as though she was ready for just about any encounter. This was a very striking posture to take up.

In her interview she makes it very clear that she uses her voice and choice of words strategically to assert her strength and bargain for power. She states very simply *' I does be ignorant.'* This ability to *be ignorant* is aim rational as it is a bid for personal power and the kind of respect that enables Phoebe to hold her own in social interactions where she needs this advantage.

Phoebe does not import foreign images of femininity to guide her mode of conduct as such a mode would not serve her particular interests. Phoebe is complaining that she is losing weight, even though she would be considered overweight by western standards where slenderness has become something of an obsession. She likes to carry some weight.

Phoebe sees herself as a warrior or a fighter[410]
and the reasons for this will emerge as the interview proceeds. For Phoebe there is a constant vigilance as she has to survive in a very oppressive environment where many people are coping with similar problems associated with poverty and very real needs that have to be won in spite of the odds. Without 'family' Phoebe is forced to fend for herself and her grandmother and so her bombastic fascade, her raucous laughter, her sense of humour and her aggressive stance are all elements of her coping strategies. And these aspects of Phoebe are now intertwined with her concept of self, her identity.

Conversation Sequence

July 9, 1983.

J: Phoebe, what year were you born?

P: 5th of February 1946 (37yrs).

J: 46! So you are a lot young..older than you look. And were you born in Trinidad?

Comment: I was about to say that Phoebe looked younger than her years when I realized that I was caught out. Phoebe looked like a woman in her late 40's as she was big and slow moving.

P: Yeahs, Jackson Hill, East Dry River.

J: Up in John John?

P: No! Once yuh cross Piccadilly Street an' den go up de hill...is dere.

J: Right I was trying to locate the place.

P: Right...'understand.

J: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

P: All away. My father is from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands and I'm de onliest chil' born here. I'm with a different mother and I have seven brothers and three sisters.

J: Are they living in St Thomas?

P: Yeahs.

Comment: Phoebe's father was working on vessels coming into Trinidad and this is how he came to have a daughter in Trinidad.

J: I was up there about two years ago. Have you been there?

P: I went 60..umh 69 since den I hav'n been back.

Comment: Phoebe would have been in her early 20's when she went to St Thomas looking for her father. And when she went on this journey of discovery she came in contact with a very different set of options for her life than the ones that she had known growing up in Trinidad. She experienced expanded horizons.

J: Just to see your dad?

P: Hmmm.

J: And did you meet with him there?

P: Yeahs.

J: And do you write to him?

P: He doesn' write to meh yuh know. An' he have a restaurant dere right now..well I could have help he. But my step-mother don' like me. If he an' his chil'ren were like normal then I could have been with dem but she jus' don' like meh. So I jus' have to fight it my way.

Comment: Phoebe has no family in Trinidad and so she went to the Virgin Islands to meet her father there. Phoebe would have been in her early 20's. This may have put her father on the spot as he had never had any direct involvement with this daughter from Trinidad. The stepmother is none too pleased to meet Phoebe when she has already got 10 children to Phoebe's father and so Phoebe does not find the welcome that she had expected. Phoebe resents that the family that she wanted to be accepted in was not 'normal' as she could not be a member there. Phoebe resorts to her style of coping by depending on her own resources to survive. However, she does have the idea that she would be one of the family if only the stepmother had been inclined to adopt her. This was patently not the case and Phoebe suspects that her stepmother was directly involved in her deportation order.

J: And so who brought you up? Your mother here?

P: My mother here? My mother is dead.

J: When did she die?

P: When I was five months old.

J: Such a little baby. So who brought you up?

P: Well de lady who brought me up died when I was fifteen years. So since den I have it on my own.

J: Ever since you were 15?

P: Yeahs

Comment: Phoebe's life does not seem to be a fortunate one when we learn that her mother died when she was 5 months old and her aunt who reared her, died when Phoebe was 15 years old. There is the feeling that Phoebe lacks connections or a network of support. And as I ask questions it seems as though she is suspicious and not ready to relax in the situation. She says lines like, 'I have it on my own'; 'I make my own way' and I got the impression that she was guarded to ward off strangers until such time as she was ready to accept them. This is one way of coping with being isolated but we will note later on that she drops the barrier and begins to speak out with a flamboyant style.

J: So where did you go to school?

P: Right in Port of Spain (St Mary's) RC.

J: Did you just go to Primary school?

P: Yeahs

J: Did you go to high school too?

P: No, I didn' go to high school 'cause de time when I was in second standard.. for t'ree years I was very bright an' I wanted to be a teacher.. An' she come an' get sick. So I have to leave school to mind her. So then she come an' she die when I was fifteen. An' I jus' take it on. I don' want no schoolin' or anyt'ing like dat. She was de onliest one I really knew, yuh know. 'Cause m' mother...(she cannot say the words)

Comment: Phoebe went to school in the 50's but from her account this period at school was not altogether significant for her after she realized that she would not be able to realize this dream of becoming a teacher. We also hear a hint of self criticism where Phoebe does not think that she was very bright after the initial stages. Somehow she came to realize that she was not destined to *be a teacher. And when she was older she did not want any schooling or anything like that. The school did not provide answers to her particular needs at the time. Life experiences had conveyed the message to Phoebe that she had to make out on her own and this lesson was not served well in the formal educational setting.*

J: And is your name your father's name?

P: My mother's name.

J: Your mother's name. And so you didn't have any pictures or anything of her?

P: Yeahs, but I los' dem now.

J: And have you got any half brothers and sisters of your mother's?

P: None. I was de onliest chil' (She makes a laugh that sounds like a wailing cry. It is the saddest laugh.) Oh God!

Comment: This laughter that is really a way of crying is illustrated in Naipaul's 'Laura' of Miguel Street. One way of coping with the pressures of this life is to adopt a superficial flamboyance. To laugh in the face of adversity and be brave in public view. This ability to laugh is very important to fend off depression and help individuals to cope.

J: So you were all alone from five months?

P: Five months to now...oooh!

J: So were there any children living with the other woman who brought you up?

P: No. Well she died when I was fifteen an' from dat I was on my own. I work, I work, I do domestic work, I do waitress .. ah work at dat again. And den I went to St Thomas an' I did cashier work. Well now I does do handicraf'..Yeahs, I does knit an' crochet.

J: And you sell it?

P: Yeahs, down South.

J: So you just do it here and you carry it down South once a week or so?

P: Yeahs...It depends. Sometimes I have a little business that I must carry down for dem.

J: And how much would you earn from that?

P: It depends. I not really sellin' sometimes but it depends. Yuh know, somebody may pass an' dey say, 'oh, I like dat bag, how much for it?' yuh know, not all de time.

J: So where are you living?

P: Well, I'm still with my grandmother across dere. But my furniture is quite in Moruga.

J: In Moruga? At the end of the island?

P: Yuh know dere?

J: yes. You couldn't be further away. Is that where you lived most of the time?

P: Yeahs..Well, Marabella first, an den after t'ree years a fella wanted de place... I remember de place but in September it will be t'ree years dat I left dere. So dey tell me, well put it dere until I get somewhere to go, yuh know..For yuh to stay.

J: So you took it from Marabella down to Moruga?

P: yeahs. So I stay by where my grandmother live until I get somewhere.

J: Is that your mother's mother?

P: Yeahs. My mother's mother..but she blind.

J: Oh, so you have got to help her?

P: Yeahs.

Comment: Phoebe has had a series of common law unions that have not stood the test of time. Now she is looking after her blind grandmother in the pensioners' quarters. This is partly because *of a sense of family loyalty or duty and partly an arrangement of mutual convenience. They live off the pension and the rent is negligible ($5, but most pensioners do not pay it). Phoebe is able to do her handicrafts and earn a little extra while she is there.*

J: And you have your children?

P: No..Two of dem died.

J: Really?

P: Yeahs.

J: You don't have any luck?

P: No (laughs that same crying laugh) Dat is true, quite true....oh goooosh yeahs (sighs a heavy sigh)

Comment: Phoebe had several pregnancies but both pregnancies that went full term resulted in still births. However, Phoebe did not dwell on this subject and went on to say that she had godchildren who she might bring up when it suited her. So she will take a godchild when the time comes.

J: And so you have done nearly every kind of work. You have done servant work, waitressing...

P:...waitressin', cookin'...cashin' (chewps)

J: What were you doing in Marabella?

P: Dere?

J: Ummhmm?

P: Waitress.. I use' to work in a restaurant.

J: Where did you learn the craft?

P: From my friend in Moruga for she does it for ..if yuh do dat yuh know, yuh could get a shillin', so I start' to sew an' do my handiwork.

Comment: Surviving often means being about to do something to generate a little income. And the skill of doing handicrafts offers this opportunity to sell something for money when money is needed.

J: Do you sew as well?

P: Yeah.. but for me. Yeahs, I could sew, but for me. I could ice a cake an' yuh know, help m'self.

J: And so what.. you just pick up these things from your friends?

P: No, sometimes from my brains. If I see you do somet'in' once, I could do it. If I see yuh, I watch yuh good an' I say, yeahs, I could do it better dan yuh. (laughs)

J: So that is how you have learnt everything?

Comment: Phoebe is quick to point out that she has a talent for imitating skills that she sees being performed. And note that she adds that she would even be better, so she is aware of her abilities and confident about herself. Phoebe's formal education has not equipped her with the kind of skills that can be turned into cash. It has been this informal education of learning skills from other people that has been most critical in learning the craft of survival. She also gives the impression of being provocative in her style. We will learn later that she likes to 'fight' and to engage in 'ol' talk' when she spends time with her male companions. This style of presentation learnt through experience is another survival skill that did not belong to a formal curriculum.

J: So how have you made out, because you have no brothers, no sisters..

P: Yeahs..No father, you could say, no mother, no husband...ooooh God!

J: But you have friends, surely?

P: Yeahs. Friends yeahs, but I don' know, we jus' can' make it.

Comment: Here we have a splitting of meanings as I am referring to 'friends' as I would use it in my cultural context but for Phoebe this term can have another meaning. Phoebe is refereeing to a man she has been 'friendin' with. The relationship went sour and became violent so Phoebe walked out. So the next few lines make little sense unless this distinction is drawn. A friend in this *context means a lover stripped of any romantic trappings that might be associated with the term.*

J: So what...did you have the two to one person or to different ones..because you tried twice and you missed out both times?

(Here we have two different thoughts)

P: Well I never tried twice...from de time it finish, I say say, well I never goin' back again. Dat is de end of it. Yuh know dat wouldn' make sense.. for yuh know.. if yuh live for about five years an' see we can' make it. What's de use of jus' goin' back.It would be de same t'ing, eh? So I wouldn' do it.

J: And what ended it?

P: I jus' pick up myself an' I leave.

Comment: When I asked the question, I was really expecting to get a description of the precipitating circumstances that brought about the decision to separate. But Phoebe just announces the fact that she left. She is not casting blame on the other party at this stage but saying that the relationship did not work out after they had given it 'time'. Here is another example of the way that Phoebe copes with problems in relationships with men. When she has given the relationship 'time' and she is still not satisfied with her position then she packs her bags and moves on or gains some distance by living away from the situation. This is a way of gaining some control as long as she has somewhere else to go.

J: Was he screwing around or what?

P: Yeahs.

J: You haven't had any men since?

P: Well a long time...it must be about...let's see,when was de las' fella... a good while (silence)

J: It must be a good while if you can't think when?

P: (roars with laughter.. tears are in her eyes)

Comment: I learnt later that Phoebe does have a male visitor but this relationship is far from harmonious much to the chagrin of *neighbours who complain of the noise and the language that accompanies these interchanges.*

J: What about carnival and things like that?

P: Well I like Carnival but I don' play mas'.

J: Not even when you were young?

P: Well when I was young I wanted to be queen of de band because I was like dis...

Comment: Phoebe points out that she was not always so big in size. And this dream of becoming queen of carnival is popular in Trinidad. When I was working for the children at the Princess Elizabeth Home I would often ask them to tell me the 3 things that they would want or would like to be if they could have their wish and the little girls would say : 'carnival queen' in almost every case. This was the symbol of success for children from the picaroon or jamette society of lower class Trinidad where the emphasis on education and social mobility via career choice or immigration had not penetrated the psyche.

P: But den de costume an' everyt'in' an' time to go...uh, uh, ... So I ain' goin' again. I don' know,somet'in' jus' turn' me away... and now, not meh.

J: I usually just go in and watch and dance with every band that is passing.

P: hmmmmmhmm, yeahs.. but when yuh say dancin'..

yeahs..give meh dancin'..

Comment: We will hear over and over again that dancing is central to the lives of women in this study. This is one mode where women express themselves freely and they are enthusiastic about this activity. Their lives may be burdened with responsibilities but when the topic of dancing comes up their whole attitude changes. It is true that these women have a command of the language but the communication and feeling that is expressed in dance is very powerful in this community. Naipaul goes so far as to suggest that dancing is what happens when 3 or more people are together in this part of Trinidad.

J: Do you go to lots of parties now?

P: Well hardly. Yuh see I have no company so it makes no sense. Yuh know how t'ings goin' dese days it makes no sense for a woman to go out by herself alone, yuh know. So it make....I does stay home. Well if it have a weddin' aroun' or a christenin' aroun'anywhere well I would go.

J: You look too fresh and too nice to be saying that you stay home.

P: Well I does go but not to say, go by myself.

J: You don't have any girlfriends?

Comment: The mention of girlfriends seems to have touched a very sensitive nerve with Phoebe. I had seen her in the company of several women friends on different occasions but this does not seem to be of great importance to Phoebe. She prefers the company of men. This is something that many women say when asked this question in our culture. Men are not caught up in petty issues, men talk about more interesting things than women and men do more interesting things than women. Phoebe underlines this point by saying 'men are always in the centre in a certain way.' It seems only natural to align yourself with those who are in the centre if you are like Phoebe, out on a limb with no family support.

P: Yuh see men.. I more prefer men friends. For yuh see de girls have too much confusion. Yuh say, I say and.... Yuh see I like to fight. I very ignorant yuh know, hot blooded. I fight back...So I prefer to go out with de fellas an' we drink, we talk ol' talk, yuh know...I like dat too much, boy..

J: How long have you been like that?

P: Since I young, growin' up. Yeahs...I don' like too much of woman frien'.

J: And you don't have any male friends either?

P: Well Yeahs, I have a lot to laugh an' talk, but not be close to meh..yuh know. We talk an' so on, yuh know.

J: So you used to have lots of male friends because they used to do lots of more interesting things?

P: Yeahs. Dey will go here, dey will go dere, yuh know. Dey would say fishin' or hikin'...Yuh know an' dey always in de centre in a certain way. But all woman would say, 'ummh...well yuh see she? She ....Well look what she have on....' An' I don' have no time for dat. I don' like dat, at all, at all, at all.

J: Too much gossip?

P: Gossip is no good...Puts yuh nowhere..

J: Except that it gets everybody vexed in a very short time.

Comment: Phoebe rejects the idea of gossip as this is a term used to describe the kind of 'talk' that women do. What Phoebe does when she gets together with her male companions is 'ol talk' which has different connotations because it is the stuff of male verbiage.

J: And so, how old are you now?

P: t'irty-seven.

J: So you ..spent..up until you were fifteen, you went to school and then after that, working..What was your first job?

P: Waitress..Honeycomb Snackette where dey sell de fried chicken in Prince Street dere. My firs' job an' dat was $18 a week.. Yuh know, firs' job.

Comment: The salary is not given to show how little she earned, but how much...Phoebe is boasting here.. This is much more than she had earned as a domestic when she was much younger than 15yrs...I am making a false assumption that she went to school until she was 15...when in fact she 'looks after her 'mother' and this does not mean a bedside arrangement..it means working, providing, doing what she could.

P: An' from dere I went St Thomas. I work as a waitress, I work as a cashier, an' a sales girl in a record shop.. in Charlotte Amarlie.

J: The capital?

Comment: Phoebe was in the US Virgin Islands as an illegal immigrant. But the range of employment positions that she enjoyed there was a significant improvement on the range of positions that she had gained in Trinidad. So as an illegal immigrant she prospered where she could be close to her father and her brothers and sisters. This is when Phoebe records that she began to grow in size because there were so many things to eat and the tonic was not expensive.

P: I came back...an' what I did, boy? (thinks)I was cookin' in a restaurant an' also doin' waitress, an' I had a next waitress job again... I was bar maid an a waitress, an' I had a next job again. I was a bar maid an' a waitress an den...after dat, I say.. 'Look I ain' workin' for nobody.' It is time now to learn to knit an' so on...So I started to knit an' help m'self.

J: So what happened that you decided to work for nobody?

P: Well yuh see,..de way how dey boss yuh aroun' an' so on, yuh know. Well, at dat time dey gave me $12 a week, $14 a week, $15 (laughs)

J: And for that you are catchin' your arse?

P: Yuh could say dat again!

J: For that money you were cooking and waitressing...

P: All o' dat! Ooh, hoo, an' jus' $14 or $15 a week...Dem all right yeahs. ... I say look, I'm all right yeahs.

I say look, to hell wid it all, yeahs... I gone!

Comment: Phoebe does not talk like someone who would take orders without protest. No doubt there are many sides to Phoebe but I have never seen these other dimensions of her character. She was always bombastic and confronting and used her size to stand her ground. She did not strike me as being a good choice for the role *of docile, deferent or willing employee. However, this style puts Phoebe in good stead if she wants to hold her own as an independent figure in her community. But this presentation would not lend itself to most lower paid positions where the employee is required to take directions from a more senior person (An authoritarian style goes with the territory. This is for both employer and employee but the employee is the silent one in the working relationship). Hence, the frequent job changes for Phoebe when she was working as a domestic employee, waitressing and so on. These jobs would not sit well with someone who boasts that she likes to fight.*

The following passage gives us an idea of just how suitable she would be performing the role of the domestic servant.

J: Right. You are not one to put up with that are you?

P: No, because dey say,..'Do dis! Do dat!...'I did not like dem to bawl dat way. I workin' for yuh an' I have dis to do, I do it... If I have dis to clean out, I will clean it up an' if I sit down....Now, for now, don' bawl behin' meh...'Oh Lord have mercy, I does get vex'. I can' take on dat...yuh know, ... Yuh come an' yuh say, 'look, yuh see dat, I want so, so here an' so, so...An' I will say, 'All right'.. but don' come back an' tell meh...'so what happen..?' That would get meh vex' because yuh know yuh done tell meh once already an' all I have is to do it an' it will be done. Dey t'ink yuh mad! I can' take on dat.

J: Well how come... You say you did some servant work?

P: Yeahs.

J: After being in St Thomas?

P: No, over here before.

Comment: I have been assuming that Phoebe worked as a domestic employee after she left school at 15. However, Phoebe has been working as a 'maid' ever since her 'mother' became ill so that she could support them. So when Phoebe was working in houses she was still very young and may have been a little more willing to take directions from others. However, she quickly moves into working in snackettes where she would be less isolated and dealing with the public.

J: Because I know that I have heard, especially among the older people...they are running behind you telling you this, that and the other, all the time. You can't do a thing in the house.

P: No. Because they are behin' yuh. How yuh could do somet'in'?

J: Yeahs. You would get so nervous that it is so difficult.

P:Of course. ... Yuh don' drop de plates, yuh t'row dem?

Comment: This statement is very ambiguous. When 'maids' drop crockery on the stone floors they are all too often accused of deliberately destroying things. However, in an environment where the employee and employer are hostile to one and other there are situations open for the employee to conduct guerrilla type actions and breaking dishes 'accidentally' is one of these. Many employers complain of 'maids' telling lies, ruining clothes in the washing and ironing processes, stealing from the house (especially the linen), burning or overcooking food and generally making the most of a very poor situation. So some of the strategies for surviving are akin to sabotage where workers draw a line between themselves and their employers and make any gain that can be got before they disappear or are fired from the job.

The other side of the maid as guerrilla model is that many women are stereotyped this way and there is no room for accidents or mistakes when the maid is defined as cunning, manipulative and dishonest.

J: I hate to be put in that situation where you are not to do anything and that you are told what to do. I would rather live in a tin shed than live like that.

P: True.

Comment: As I say this I realise that Phoebe is sharing a very tiny pensioner's one room apartment with an annex for toilet and basin. The roofing is galvanized iron and there is no shade. True, it is not exactly a tin shed, but it certainly does not afford any luxury in a middle class imagination.

J: So now you are doing your craft and taking it backwards and forwards?

P: Up an' down, here an' dere...

J: The taxis must know you well?

Comment: Another assumption.. she would not pay for a drop car seat when she could get there more cheaply on a bus. She has time, but not money. So Phoebe would give a higher priority to spending less money than getting to her destination in a hurry. Another factor about taking more time on the bus is that she is more likely to meet other people to talk with and she likes to be out in the public domain. So Phoebe has a certain charm when she decides to use it.

One of Phoebe's coping skills is her ability to strike up casual conversations with fellow travellers. It seems as though she has difficulty with intimacy but not so with conviviality, especially of a raucous knee slapping variety. And this ability would enhance sales of handicrafts. She often wears headties that she offers for sale or takes orders from people based on an item that she was wearing when she struck up a conversation.

P: De bus, de bus. .. Well I am friendly an' I does make friends. I go to people sometimes, probably at de endin' of dis month because I write a letter tellin' dem dat I want to come. An' de same girl dat taught meh handicraf', we will be goin' over dere to sell.

J: So you set up this business together...And you sell in a shop?

Comment: The handicraft business is a very informal arrangement. The women work alone or together and sell from their contacts and from their homes. In this style of operation it serves Phoebe well to make many casual acquaintances.

P: No! We will..We would like to get somewhere to sell but it so hard...We do de workin' an' it stay at home an' if anybody come to see dem, ...Yuh know we do shell work, hangin' basket or machrame... crochet, make lamps out of coconut shell. ...We does all dat.

Comment: Phoebe is letting me know what I should take her for.. she is proud here. Many women stress their skills as important for making money to get them by but Phoebe sees this as a way to keep her independence and be her own boss while she is taking care of *her grandmother.*

J: I noticed these things in the airport. Are they your's?

P: No, not our's.

J: It would be good to get a contract like that?

P: Dat would be nice..dat right.

J: That would have you working off your feet, but at least the money would be going to you.

P: Dat's right.

J: Do you get ten days at all?

Comment: The government offers ten days of paid work to the unemployed with the Department of Environment Works Division or DEWD)

P: Actually I never tried, because yuh see yuh see how my gran'mother' blind, yuh know I jus' cool dem out an' I don' go nowhere... Yeahs, an' she cries. She is miserable. ...Oh my Lord!

Comment: From the description of events that follows you can see that the relationship between Phoebe and her grandmother is strained. Their perceptions about being clean and presentable are certainly very different and there are signs that 'granny' is not really co-operative, indeed at times she seems to protest the interference of this younger person in her house and yet she is blind and unable to take care of herself. Phoebe does not want others to take advantage of her grandmother's frailty but the idea of staying at home and caring for granny does not exactly fit Phoebe's style. Some areas of conflict will be readily apparent in this next sequence.

P: I say to granny, if tomorrow I get a husband, I have to leave yuh. Yuh don' expec' meh to sit down wid yuh all de days of my life!

Because.. I put curtains, I buy a mat, she t'row it outside. I put curtains, she burn it down. I put curtains, she mash it up. I buy dis, she mash it up. Granny.. I want to mop out here.. Don' be, be, be, be...' Dis place dirty, how yuh expec' I to bring anybody to come here to dis place? 'Don' tell meh not'in' because yuh sweep las' week'..I say 'Granny take off dat dress, it want washin' '... 'Who tol' yuh dat black, who tol' yuh dat dirty,...who tol' yuh dat dirty; dat only perspiration..' Yuh could stop in yuh dirty clothes as long as I know mine is clean. She miserable...oh Lord!.. dat lady miserable.

I was fatter dan dis yuh know an' I los' 66 poun' t'rough she! (slaps her knee)

J: Through she..so she is your diet? If you stay you are going to slim right down?

P: For she? She naggin' meh so much eh.

J:So if you lose too much weight, you might end up getting married and move out anyway?

Comment: Note, I am imposing my values about being slim..and attractive.. Phoebe likes to be big and to throw her weight around to have power and control.. She does not care for slenderness. With all that bulk Phoebe can stand her ground in the circles that she moves in. What benefits are there for her to be slim. She does not value being small. I do..and I am five months pregnant when this interview is taking place. I am at the stage where I have left slenderness behind and I am very sensitive about my weight. To me, being overweight is a sign that I have been out of control, it makes me feel vulnerable. For Phoebe, being large puts her in control.

P: Well, dat is good. But she miserable, she miserable.. Dis mornin' she give meh $10, she want meh to buy a chicken, buy she potato, an' a poun' banana, buy sweet plantain...for de $10!

J: And buy a car too with the change!

Comment: Many old folk have not been able to keep up with the rapid changes that have taken place in Trinidad, especially the rate of *inflation of food prices. In this case, Phoebe is pointing out that her grandmother has unrealistic ideas about what can be purchased for $10. Older women all comment on the prices that they once paid for foodstuffs and also the way that things were shared in the community because of the lack of storage for perishables like vegetables and meat.*

P: (Laughs..loud, raucous hah, hah)..I say, 'Granny, dis is not long time. Long time I would get somet'in' for 50c..not again! But yuh mus' see somebody. .. I say granny, a poun' of eddoes is $3 dis mornin', an' sweet potatoes is $3 a small heap.

Den she say, all right, I buy a bag o' rice an' make it do fo' meh...God!..when dat woman miserable, eh! Oh gosh, oh gosh..oh God!

J: I wonder why old people are like that? Especially in Trinidad..the changes have been so sudden, I guess.

P: Yeahs.

J: Because...How old is your grandmother?

P: 75.(dob:1908)

J: Yeahs, because when they were growing up, things just went up a cent at a time. Where, here you go to the market one day and the next day the same thing is a dollar more and so on...

P: She won' understand dat, for all de time dis girl here, Jessica. She was stayin' by us an' sometimes she would send Jessica..Jessica say Granny, 'Granny yuh don' understand how t'ings have gone up.' She still feel, well it is 50c for dis an' 25c for dat an' 10c for dat! She is somet'ing else, my dear..oh my!

Comment: Granny may not know that prices are rising rapidly, but she probably would know that both Jessica and Phoebe are fond of gambling in a racing pool and in card games. So Granny would be wondering what portion of 'inflation' was involved in gambling and what portion went on food. As Granny was blind it may well be *that Granny's pension is controlled by her grand-daughter and a lot of this 'miserable' behaviour of granny's has to do with conflicts as well as frustrations between these two women.*

J: She hasn't been blind all her life? She has just gotten blind as she has grown old?

P: Yeahs. ummhmm..catarac'..

Comment: This old woman is blind because she has cataracts. However, this problem can be treated by an operation on the eyes to remove the affected area. These patients do not seem to be first in line for operations of this kind and it is very likely that granny would put her trust in faith healing and herbal remedies before seeking a medical solution.

J: But I guess too, that she is on a pension.

P: Yeahs. She's a pensioner.

J: And they get about $100.. $200?

P: No, $250 now..

J: Right, well that is double.

P: Yeahs, an' she don' eat much. Jus' 2 spoons of somet'ing, an' she is not fussy. That I boil potato an' fry sausage..She'll eat it. .. If I boil potato an' fry a' egg..she will eat it. An' yuh know sometimes she will feel for de meat too. Yuh know, but she ain' fussy to eat. She say...well, she might say..well boil a piece of soup an' open a tin of sardine' wid dat..yuh know? She ain' accustom' to new t'ings..She ain' fussy.

J: As long as she gets enough. But you can't eat like that too or you would have lost 100 pounds? Are you trying to lose weight?

P: No! I'm not tryin'. I done loss already!

J: You must have been a big woman before?

P: Well yeahs. Since granny, I have break it down. I los' 66...

J: But how did you get so big?

Comment: Many women in Trinidad are very bulky from their diet of heavy starches and carbohydrates but they are in fact malnourished. Phoebe complains that she is breaking down in size because of the problems that she has with her grandmother, the mental effort involved in caring for granny. As you can see from the description of granny's diet, it would be very difficult to stay at over 200 pounds on a diet of soup and sardines.

P: I don' know. I was always...no, when I went St Thomas I started to get fat. Yeahs, yuh see what it did me.. All de t'ings dat I saw over dere, I jus' started to eat, eat, eat, eat, eat, eat...an' den de tonics was cheaper dan here so I start to drink tonic, drink tonic.. an' I sort of spread, spread.

Comment: When Phoebe was in St Thomas she was exposed to a greater variety of foodstuffs in the supermarkets. Because Trinidad in the 60's was not as well served by supermarkets as it is today and the variety of foodstuffs plus the novelty of new tastes may have been some substitute for a stranger looking for a sense of family from her father.

J: So now with Granny you are getting small again?

P: Yeahs.. I gettin' small.. I don' mind yuh know...

J: But you will have to buy a new wardrobe soon..

P: Well dis is it, but I can sew it m'self. So dere's no problem.

J: But you don't make things for other people?

P: Ummmmhnnn! (no)

J: I was just talking to Jessica about her sewing. And she says that she sews a little bit. So she has seen hard times. How long was Jessica with you?

P: For t'ree months, de last of December an' she lef' dere in February..no, March ..January, February, March...de 7th of March she lef' my house an' she's gone nex' door.

Comment: Jessica has moved from place to place after she left her husband and children. She stayed with Mr. Compton until she moved into the flat next door to take care of another pensioner with failing sight. (Many older people suffer with diabetes and this also is accompanied by failing sight in old age.)

J: Yes, she is living there now. So is your place the same size?

P: Yeahs, same size. All of dese buildin's is de same.

Comment: These quarters are basically a single room and so it would be very cramped for two people when one happens to be Phoebe who is gregarious and likes to bring home friends that she meets to sell her handicrafts. And she loves to be raucous and her friends say that they know where she is just by following the laugh.

J: Right. And how long have you lived in the Beetham?

P: (counts on fingers) A year an...January, February, March, April.. a year an' 5 months.

Comment: It is very common to see women counting out loud and using their fingers to make calculations as their education did not go beyond a very elementary level.

J: And do you like it here?

P: No.. too much of bad words...every two words people say is a bad word..mother-dis an' mother-dat. Ooh, how de people could cuss...What! oh Gosh!

Comment: When people cuss each other down the vilest form of abuse is to refer to and make inferences about the person's mother's sexual activities to denigrate her in a way that would shock, insult and humiliate the 'opponent'. A more general practice is to prefix 'mother' to the very provocative colloquial terms for female genitals. In a culture and community where the mother is a very powerful and a revered symbolic figure it is common to target this idol to inflame the emotions of a rival. In our culture most swearing is derived from terms related to sexual intercourse and progeny.

We might also note that Phoebe hears foul language on the tongues of others but she does not admit that she too engages in verbal combat on a regular basis. It is only when Phoebe links the ability to pelt words with being able to stand her ground in her role as bar tender in a gambling parlour that we hear the other side of this 'bad language' issue.

J: Even in the pensioners' area? I thought, down the road maybe?

P: All around here. Especially like, when dey drink. All in de night. Oh gosh, yuh could hear bad words...bad words too bad.

Comment:* *There is a problem with alcohol among the pensioners in the Beetham according to the younger residents. However, the pensioners blamed all their problems on the younger people who smoke marijuana and sniff cocaine. I noted that some women who had agreed to talk to me were unable to do so because they had already had more to drink than they could handle and stay awake. A few women had passed out before I could speak with them and this annoyed my friends who were trying to introduce me to women in the area. Some women I talked to were 'drinkers' living on cardboard in Tamarind Square. They had literally drank themselves out of their homes or been evicted from their lodgings because of their drinking.

J: I have never been here during the night, only during the day and every time I come in it is quiet. An' I thought gosh, it must be because it is pensioners living here?

P: Ooh! Pensioners, huh! It have a set, she an' de husband always fightin' (referring to Pleasant and Peter)

J: Oh yes, next door? I looked through the window when I went by one day and I thought, God, who lives in there! I couldn't believe...

P: It is so thil'ty..

J: I guess it is the fire that makes it all black like that?

Comment: Most people in this section of the Beetham use pitch oil as a fuel for cooking and this blackens the ceiling and those areas where the fine soot lands.

P:..an' de dogs, an' de cats, an' de fowls on de bed...sleepin' with dem dog, cats, an' fowls sleepin' on de bed!..an' she say, dat is my chil'ren!

J: Oh, just one person alone?

P: She an' a mister.. an' de dog, an' de cat on de table, on de pot, on de stove.. Oh mama, an' de fowl on de safe, on de stove.

J: They must be quite characters then?

P: Oh Gosh, yeahs.

J: And they are both pensioners?

Comment: There are many non-pensioners living in the quarters now until Fr. Pantin gets everything cleared out again. Most of the pensioners are very grateful to Fr. Pantin as he labours on their behalf and sees to it that the old people are not victimized by residents who have managed to move into the area without becoming a pensioner first. The older people were particularly afraid of the 'rastas' who had moved in as they behaved in ways that were strange and they were perceived as threatening.

P: Yeahs.

J: So you didn't live at Moruga? You lived at Marabella and you...

P: Yeahs, an' den I went to Moruga, yeahs. Well I say, I accustomed to goin' up dere since about...when I came from St Thomas. I use' to go up because I was runnin' a gamblin' club.

J: Oh Yes?

P: Yeahs, I was runnin' a gamblin' club as barmaid. An' I use' to run de club for de mister.

J: Oh, you are quite a character(laughs)

P: Well I had a lot o' hard work an' dat is how I ain' workin' again.

J: That is hard work?

P: Oh Gosh, all night 'til mornin'. Sometimes I would lie down tryin' to sleep with my eye open, so (She pushes the lid up to show the opened eye while the other is closed..to give a comic effect)

Comment: Humour is a very important coping strategy for Phoebe. She uses very graphic language, she acts out sequences to make a point very vivid, she gestures with her hands to enhance her communication and she is audience and storyteller when she laughs at the things she is saying. Humour lifts her out of herself and the situation so that she becomes aware of the way things are or how people act in given situations. This ability to go beyond an entrenched egocentrism allows her flexibility and insight. This ability is helping her to deal with the frustrations associated with her current situation of being 37, living with her grandmother and fending for herself and her grandmother in an environment that she perceives as threatening.

J: What kind of gambling?

P: Poker and whapee.

(Pleasant comes to the rear door)

Pleasant: Ma. (calling for Hester)

P: Ma outside.

Pleasant: De man carried m' bowl..de bowl wid me butter I buy from de people.

J: Hester.

Pleasant: Ma..de man carried me bowl wid me butter.

H: Who Peter? Is dat de fresh butter or de cookin' butter?

Pleasant: de cookin' butter...look de man carried de bowl wid me butter..

H: huh!

Comment: The woman next door is accusing her common law partner of having stolen her cooking butter. She is very upset but this does not seem to be bothering Hester who goes looking for the bowl with a 'huh', walking in the direction of the army of cats at the back of the apartment. It would be no surprise for Pleasant's partner to steal something but this does not seem like something that he would steal.

J: So what gambling games was it again now?..poker, whapee.

P: Yeahs, poker, whapee, sipsam...I forget de games yeahs.

J: Roulette?

P: No, not dose...no, no, no..jus' cards. Yeahs, card games.

J: So would this be in the bar or..

P: No, it had de drinkin' section here an' de gamblin' section on de other side. So dey would jus' leave n' come across if dey want somet'in'. It have tables an' chairs to sit on an'... yuh know.

J: And this was Moruga?

P: Yeahs. I was takin' care of de money an' sellin' de drinks.

J: My, how did you hold up?

P: Yeahs, I hold up because it was goin'...Yuh see how under my eyes black? It was too much. I shrivellin'. Because it is every night yuh have to set up an' den I have dis juke box blastin' in yuh head...oh my Lord!

J: You must have been tough to do that?

P: Yeahs, I does be tough yeahs. Yuh have to be good for yuh-self. Yuh have to pelt a bad word here an' dere because if yuh can' do dat dey t'ink yuh stupid!

Comment: Note here where Phoebe points out that you have to 'pelt a bad word here an' dere because if yuh can' do dat dey t'ink yuh stupid'. For Phoebe the use of foul language is an art where she demonstrates to the gambling customers (predominantly men) that she is not stupid and cannot be fooled by cowering under their tongues. She can give as good as she gets and then some. She adds a little slapping on the knee, some sharp claps, the kind of eye contact that would cause a snake to retreat and strong gestures with her hands to amplify the impact. Phoebe has refined the art of 'being ignorant' to survive as a barmaid and gambling attendant for about 15 years (ever since she returned from St Thomas and realized that she had to make it without her family).

J: You had to be ignorant or you wouldn't have had that job?

P: God yeahs! (laughs)

J: So you were well qualified?

P: (laughs louder and louder)

J: How else could you do that? You couldn't be sitting up doing your nails or something like that... you would never be able to do that job?

P: True.

J: But that must have had your nerves going?

P: Yeahs, nervous.

J: You weren't ever worried about robberies?

P: No. I had a cutlass at hand an' de owner of de place had a gun. But den in de country side dey wouldn' rob yuh so.

Comment: Phoebe makes a rural vs. city distinction suggesting that people were not likely to commit these crimes in the country. Mind you, she mentions that she is sitting with a cutlass and that the manager is armed with a gun so security is a consideration.

Phoebe has commented that she likes to fight, that she is 'ignorant', that she prefers the company of men and she has to make out on her own and so this job has a certain appeal. However, she has grown tired of working throughout the night and having that music blasting in her ears. She feared for her health and took a rest from the job by coming to live with her grandmother in the city.

She also took leave of the owner of the gambling parlour at the very same time although there is still a connection and a lot of unfinished business on this score.

J: Because it is not like Port of Spain?

P: No. Dey wouldn' study to do dat yuh know. Always had a cutlass at hand.. at de side o' me. (And Phoebe shows where the cutlass would have been within easy reach)

J: And how did you get on with the boss there?

P: The bar? The boss..oh , is de same person who have my furniture. I use' to stay by dem.. But de club... now...It had de club downstairs an' de upstairs was mine. I had a t'ree bedroom apartment an' furniture an' everyt'in.

J: You must have gotten very tired to move out of there?

P: De owner furnishes everyt'in... So I's like a queen!

J: You must have been sitting up there in all that?

P: (laughs)

Comment: When a woman like Phoebe leaves accommodation like this there would have to be very good reason. She mentions concern for her health and concern for her grandmother after an old lady was raped and murdered in her pensioners' apartment. She also mentions that she was not making any money for all this work and so it did not make sense staying. At the time Phoebe moved into her granny's apartment, Jessica was there. However, Jessica's husband had made one attempt to murder Jessica and she was afraid to name the father of her infant as she feared that he would dispose of her rather than pay any money for the child and so Phoebe was concerned that Jessica's presence, while helpful for her blind grandmother, may be putting her grandmother at risk. Jessica was also a prostitute by night leaving granny alone when she was most vulnerable.

J: And why did you leave?

P: De settin' up... too much of settin' up an' I was gettin' nervous an' I say 'look, it ain' no sense...I ain' make anyt'ing.

Comment: Phoebe was not only living in the apartment upstairs but she was in a common law relationship with the boss. This meant that she did a lot of the work in the gambling parlour but she was not being paid enough money to make this worth her while. She fell out with her boss and moved in with her grandmother. And the boss is still coming to visit her in the Beetham and neighbours' complaints would suggest that the conflict is yet to be resolved.

J: It just got too much for you so you took the break?

P: Yeahs..I start to look ol'...I lookin' good now. I watch how m' face all..(she makes a face) ..an' I say, 'Nuh!' So I res' off. I take coolin', purge an' so on, an' drink medicine, an' a little tonic...

J: And who gives you the medicine?

P: Ugh?

J: I was just talking to mistress John and when I was there she was making medicine. She had her various leaves in the pot?

P: Well, I do dat m'self!

Comment: Concern for health is a very practical coping strategy among women in this area. Phoebe sees herself as being alone in the world and so it would be essential for her to look after her health to survive. We note here that she has taken various actions to assist her well being that are traditional practices among community members. The art of herbal preparation is passed down from one generation to the next.

J: You do it yourself? So what do you boil up for taking a purge, say?

P: Senna an' salts or yuh use coreili, or you could use..umh.. what does purge yuh again?..Gum of alloes itself would purge yuh. Milk of magnesia... ..All of dat would purge... It have herb tea dat would purge yuh..

J: And would you buy these in the market, or would you find them?

P: I get dem at Moruga. I jus' pick dem up an' I fix dem.

J: You don't have to buy at all?

P: No, dat is why I like up dere for, an' come dere for. Anyt'ing yuh want, yuh don' have to buy. Because home dere dey have a yard big an' yuh have plantain, an' a little mixture for heart, for pressure, for blood, for every little t'ing. Yuh don' have to study for go to doctor. By de time I say, 'me head hurt meh.' He say, go an' pick two leaf an' boil it. An' I boil it an' I drink it.

J: So they know lots about bush medicine?

P: Yeahs. ummmhmm.

J: That is something that I know nothing about. I know that Hester always takes a purge some days and she always swears by this and says that it keeps her fresh.

P: Yeah, yeah.. yuh mus' take a purge. Look, up to dis mornin' I take a purge. Mus' always. Yuh have to take a purge man!

Comment: It is commonly held that once you become constipated your system will deteriorate. And so purging is a cleansing ritual that is practiced by everybody I spoke with.

J: Is that why you are losing weight? Are you feeling better or did you feel good when you were big too?

P: Big, all here in m' belly. Short breath an' if I have to go somewhere I can' walk..well now I more active. uh!

J: You can walk longer?

P: Dance longer!

Comment: Phoebe often changes the emphasis that I make by giving her priorities to things. In the heat many overweight people cannot walk in the sun as they grow short of breath and perspire very heavily. But having mentioned walking she then goes on to stress that the greatest benefit in losing the weight is that she can dance longer. So here again we note that dancing is central in her priorities. Dance is not simply a fringe factor in the lives of these women, it is seen as essential. In an area where poverty abounds it seems that dancing is important as a way of coping with the hardships that attend daily.

Because dancing is seen as essential in the lives of poor women and as they do dance it is often assumed that the poor are happy. However, to dance in middle class circles where the tourist industry aims its advertisements, is to engage in something ephemeral to one's life and it is recreational, unless of course, one is a dancer. To these women dancing is of primary importance. To understand this attitude towards dance and the experience of the dance is crucial to understanding the significance this activity holds for the people here. To dance is essential, it is that important.

J: How often do you go to fetes?

P: Meh..Hardly except if I went to a weddin' jus' up de road an' I had a good time.

J: And are you religious at all?

P: I am a catholic but I don' have de time to go to church t'rough m' grandmother.

J: Oh well, there are quite a few people who are catholic in this area?

P: Yeahs.

J: Do you have anything to do with SERVOL?

P: Who, meh! No. Servol is ol' people an' trainin'.

Comment: Several women have commented to the effect that religious expressions are the province of older women who have altered priorities. For some reason religious practice is more in harmony with an older person's lifestyle and preparation for death but in this community there is many a reference to God. For Phoebe a lot of her expletives include 'God'. Phoebe does not seem to operate as if the control of the things that happen in her life are external to herself even though she has had very little in the way of good fortune. However, in her own community she is not seen as having an extraordinary life even though there is relentless struggle just in surviving.

J: So you are going to stay here indefinitely or have you got other plans?

P: I wish I could go right away..now! Go away and do some work or somet'ing.

J: So you have got your mind working on another project?

P: Yeahs, I never put my mind on one t'ing.

Well if I'd a get a husband..Well I cool, but

dat so hard to fin' (Laughs).

Comment: Here is another strategy for coping. Phoebe says here that she never puts her mind on one thing only as she has to be always thinking of ways to carry on from where she happens to be at any point in her life. Of course, she would like someone else to take over her life if she could locate a husband but she has to be realistic about just who is available and willing to take on Phoebe.

J: You get lots of men, but husbands?

P: Plenty men. But dey jus' want to eat an' go. I don' want dat. I want somebody to take care of me an when de week come or de month come, dey say, well dis is your's an' my head hurt meh.. yuh know. But dey jus' want to come around buh, buh, buh,... I can' take on dat. I gettin' dat, I gettin' dat, but I don' want dat. Dey only out for kicks. I can' take on dat.

J: You get past it don't you?

P: Yeahs. 'So yuh nice.' Yeahs papa..ooh!

J: You have heard it all before?

P: Ah, I accustom' to dat like a record.(Laughs).. It come like an ol' record!

J: It is only the ones that it is new to that get taken in by that?

P: Yeahs.

J: But after a while it doesn't sound too true, its false?

P: An' dey does stay aroun' as long as yuh have.

Comment: Phoebe makes a gesture with her hands to indicate that men stay as long as you have money. She is very explicit about what the men in her life want: food, money and sexual intercourse. And as she suggests, she is getting plenty of that already but she is tired of this kind of life. She wants a man who will take care of her. At 37 she is entertaining the idea of a more permanent relationship but she is realistic enough to suspect that this find would be a rare one for her.

Phoebe copes with men by knowing that you do not necessarily believe what they say as she is used to hearing them turn on the charm.. it has become like an' old record to her. She wants someone who will bring money and someone she can take care *of and be taken care of in return. This kind of relationship is not 'out of the question' altogether, but it seems like a fantasy in this context where women fend for themselves their children in a large segment of this district.*

P: So where yuh really from?

J: I am from Australia originally but I am living in Canada. My husband was born in Trinidad.. in Arouca. So I came from Australia to here. I do it the wrong way around...All Trinidadians are going away!

P: I have a friend from Carnival. She was a lecturer, I t'ink, from Canada. She come ev'ry year.. Rena.. Rena what? A short white lady...As soon as she reach down here, she bare feet, she short pants... She want to go here, she want to go by dis juke box, she want to dance here, she want to...oh! She nice too bad. Like little dolly, she short, short. She nice too bad, boy. It is a long time I ain' seein' her because when I leave South an' come down...Well she does stay by ..by a frien' of mine at Oropouche because dat frien' he go an' went up...An' she tell meh, well yuh could come up, but at dat time I didn' have de money to go so I never went.

Comment: This description of a Canadian lecturer is a reversal for it shows how someone from Trinidad sees a Canadian woman. She wears short pants and goes bare foot in public, which no self respecting Trinidad woman would do and certainly not a lecturer at the University of the West Indies. This woman is described as being like a little dolly who dances to the music that comes from a juke box. These images reminded me of the 'minstrel' where the white man dresses up to look like a black man. At carnival time in Trinidad many masqueraders like to dress up as minstrels so black men dress up like white men imitating black men and the result is hideous. Here Phoebe has the Canadian lecturer being like a little dolly in short pants dancing to juke box music in Oropouche and one wonders if the Canadian is like the 'minstrel' imitating some idea she has of Trinidadian folk, another fantasy.

J: I thought in the gambling business that you would be loaded?

P: (Laughs) No dat all blow up! (makes a noise like a boiling kettle)..

J: You know how to spend it too. I don't know too many people in Canada who come down here but all I see whenever it is Carnival is all the old Trinidadians coming back. Lots of tourists come down, but the rest of the year you don't see too many. Only when boats come in and things like that and then I hide.

P: Too much of people?

J: Yeah, yeah.. Well it doesn't matter how long you have lived here, as soon as they see me come, it is 'taxi, taxi?' I get followed all around, ' 'Want to buy a watch?'

P: What about dis, what about dat?

J: I don't mind sometimes if I am in a good mood.. but everyday!

P: Yuh get dat over an' over.. It mus' get fed up man?.. Well dey don' know.. Dey figure, well yuh jus' come. So yuh know yuh way about de place already?

J: I have fellows following me saying, 'taxi, taxi'..and then when I get to my car and pull out the keys and drive off they scratch their heads.

P: (Laughs)

J: And these smart men come out and say how nice you are and are you staying at the Hilton... and think that you are looking for some little fellow to take you around....But it is OK unless you get fed up.. It's not all bad.. I often hear about relatives who have gone away, and nearly everybody in Trinidad has somebody away? How come you came back to Trinidad from St Thomas?

P: Well..ummh.. I was stayin' in St Thomas..

J: You were not legal?

P: ..an m' step mother send de immigration for meh. Dat is t' tell yuh how she don' like meh. We can' agree at all,at all, at all. We can' agree, an' I am his firs' chil'. Yuh see all here (points) his eye brows, his nose, ev'ryt'ing!

J: You are your father down to your teeth?

Comment: Phoebe has not had much to do with her father and so she has picked up on how she resembles him physically as a way of authenticating her claim as his child. These physical similarities reassure her that she is who she thinks she is even though she is an alien in her father's land.

P: Dat lady don' like meh, she really don' like meh at all.. an' she knows how I stayin' an' she send de immigration for meh.

J: Oh my God!

P: One nice white fella come up an' he saw meh an' he was polite an' so on.. He say, all right, well I won't take yuh now. Yuh come to de office in de mornin' an' so on an' so fort'. So he say, look, to avoid anyt'ing, go home. An' I came home an' I ain' been back at all. I didn' have to go to immigration for any court trial or anyt'ing I jus' came straight back...I end de story.

J: Right, right.. They didn' penalize you?

P: No.. A nice white fella. He was nice. He say, well Phoebe I have to send yuh.. is better yuh go home.

J: Before there is trouble?

P: Any trouble? He was easy on meh. I say well, m' father from here. Well he say, it is better yuh go home, take a little holiday an' t'ing, get a fresh passport an' come up again. An' since den I can' go nowhere (claps)

Comment: For Phoebe it was difficult to be deported from the U.S. Virgin Islands where she was able to find work and be near her father and her brothers and sisters. However, she is able to report that the man who carried out the order for her deportation was sympathetic in his treatment of her. The wrong-doer in her eyes is her stepmother, not the United States Department of Customs and Immigration.

J: Why is that?

P: I don' know. Every time I plan, not'ing happen.. it disappoint meh. It probably happen like dat. Maybe one day, one day I will be happy. I myself will travel, travel, travel, travel.....

J: Well you look like the kind of person who, if you get it in your head to do something, it would be done?

P: Yeahs, I like to travel, I like to meet people, I like to make friends.

P: Don't you get bored with things now?

P: Like...Well I get bored of bein' here sometimes. Sometimes I get bored an' go to town, go into a shop an' come back.

I get bored wid de air itself... for everywhere is bad words...well mother-dis and mother-dat...My Lord have mercy!

Comment: Phoebe seems very frustrated with her life at this point as it is not easy to look after her grandmother and her environment is oppressive. When she said that she gets bored with the very air itself, there is a heavy melancholy sense of despondency. She is tired of having to fight and listen to the language of the night. And as we talk a little girl is getting licks and screaming as each stroke is dealt out, it seems never to end.

Phoebe comments that the little girl bawls when she gets *'licks' and so she has not learnt how to take it yet. She will learn one day to be quiet when she is getting 'licks'.*

P: If yuh come too late dey rape yuh.

J: What!

P: Dey does rape yuh, yuh know..

J: In this area?

P: What... hmmmm. Dey doin' all kin' of t'ings. Yuh can' take it easy in here.

J: In this area?

P: Hmm..Dey kill an' ol' lady down de far end. Dey go in de ol' lady's place an' rape de ol' lady an' kill her.

J: What?

P: Yuh t'ink it easy man? Dere was another ol' woman in de gamblin' parlour who dey do dat. Dat is why I stay wid m' grandmother for I wouldn' like for dem to do dat. I askin' God for patience.

Comment: From this sequence you can see that life in the pensioners' section of the Beetham is not free of violence. It is not the place where people have the evening of their life in peace after the travails of former years. Rape and murder in the neighbourhood casts a shadow of fear for those who are growing frail and living alone. One of the ways that women cope is by having a younger person to share their accommodation but for the most part, they lock themselves in and go to bed early. Compton mentioned that he would open his door to nobody after dark and if he is still in town when night falls then he remains there until morning.

J: The guys must have been off their heads?

P: Gracious! Dey smoke an' take coke an' all kin' of stupidness! Dey have no mercy whether yuh are ol' or whether yuh are young. As long as dey seeing yuh have bag, dey doin' anyt'ing. Dey don' care.

J: Did they hold a grudge against the old lady?

P: No Dey jus' do dat. Dey wicked! wicked!

J: How long ago was that?

P: Dat is about... Dat was about in February now, I t'ink it was in February yeahs? About dat time.

J: Did they go before the courts or anything?

P: Dey don' know. An' if dey see anyt'ing...nobody does tell dey tale...dey don' know not'ing! Dem is de kin' of people yuh have aroun' here. I does keep far from dem.

J: They would be worried unless they would come and do it to them?

P: Dey don' hear not'in..Dey would see somebody killin' yuh wid two eyes dere an' when de police come an' ask dem anyt'ing dey say.. I wasn' dere.. Yeahs...yuh see dey style?

Comment: The people in this community do not speak out about the violence or inform police about these events because they are aware of their own vulnerability. They do not 'meddle'. As Phoebe suggests, people could see something happening right in front of them but they would remain silent or deny being a witness of the event. Compton mentioned that the people are all aware of the murderers' identities and it would only be a matter of time before a balance was struck.

J: My! I have heard that things happen in town where people just pretend that nothing is going on. There was one old pensioner and someone came up and started beating him up in the shop and there were lots of young people around and they did nothing. (The old man was East Indian and he was carrying his savings)

P: Dey did not'ing, oh Lord!

J: They just pretended not to see and this old guy got robbed.

Nobody did anything and I was surprised. I did not see this happen but it was the talk of the town that day; everybody was talking about it.

(tape ended: change over)

P: Phoebe Wesleberg.

J: That sounds German or something like that?

Comment: Phoebe gave her surname as Phoebe Alvarez and now she is giving me the name she also goes under, her father's surname, Wesleberg. When listening to funeral announcements it is common for a person to be named and then a long list of 'also known as' names. This is true of those who are eluding police detection. It is also true of women who have lived in a series of unions where they have used the name of their respective partners. Many people have a name given to them by family and friends, like Sonny, Boyee, Boysin or Boysy. East Indian families also have public and family names.

P: I t'ink my father is from Germany and my grandmother from St. Martin. She is Dutch. My grandmother if from Venezuela....and my grandfather was an Indian mix-up. So I a callaloo!

Comments: Phoebe does not know very much about her father's side of the family. If her paternal grandmother was from St Martin (St. Maarten) she would very likely be Dutch as this island is half French and half Dutch. Mind you there were German settlers on many islands. With a name like Alvarez it is likely that she was carrying the name of her Venezuelan ancestors as this is Spanish. Phoebe calls herself a 'callaloo' as this is a creole dish where a swizzle stick is used to make an homogenous consistency of the ingredients.

J: Well, you are a real delicate blend.

P: (laughs) Callaloo.

J: Where else but Trinidad could that happen. And do you speak any of the other languages?

P: A little bit of Spanish, the patois... Dat is all.

J: Where do you use the different languages?

P: Well, like if I see any ol' person well, I will talk to dem in patois..De broken French for dey does prefer it.

J: For I know Mistress John, she speaks in patois.

P: Patois, yeahs.

J: But she is from Grenada.

P: Yeahs dey speak dat language down dere.

J: So where did you pick up the Spanish?

P: My mother. ...When I say m' mother, I mean de woman who brought meh up nuh. Yuh know m' mother died when I was five months?

J: But she would have spoken in Spanish?

P: Yeahs, she spoke Spanish.

J: So the one that brought you up spoke Spanish also.

P: One moment she would speak Spanish to meh an' de next she would speak patois. She would tell meh, good mornin' in Spanish or good mornin' in patois. So I pick it up. Yuh have to.

Comment: Phoebe's formal education did not go beyond primary school and yet she is bilingual and has a smattering of French patois.

J: You did not ever forget?

P: Nuh, nuh, nuh..an' I would like to learn more too. Because I don' know too much of it.

J: Have you ever thought of going to Venezuela?

P: I went! But I spent a week an' I came back...'n so yuh see, I went over for a judge. His wife was a principal an' de Friday de man jus' take an' died.

J: What! And you had only just arrived?

P: So it was a week we had already and he died de Friday. Yeahs, I had to fly back home.. yeahs. Because he jus' tell de daughter to dance with meh, de mornin' of his birthday. So de wife say, well look Phoebe we want bake an' corn fish. We want yuh to make bake for us. So she said to go to de shop an' I bought flour an' what not, so I came back home now an' she call him an' say Sylvester, look what Phoebe gone an' make, dumplin' an corn fish. As I say dumplin' which is bake in Spanish. So she go an tell him, well go an' bathe an' t'ing an' tonight we keepin' a party for you. So she say, 'Look Phoebe, it have brandy an' whiskey an' champagne an' so do you want a drink?' So I say well, I will drink a brandy, yeahs. So I went an' I made de flour an' put de bakes in de oven an' everyt'ing fix up. I go an' I take a drink of brandy. An he say 'Evelyn, dance with Phoebe', so she runs back an' say 'What yuh say?' He say to dance with Phoebe. So when I was dere I see de man smile an' yuh know, dat was de las' smile. Den he jus' do so (she slumps sideways on her chair).. Dat was dat.

J: Gone. You couldn't get another job?

P: No, for I couldn't take de shock, I come back home. Jus' how de man now talkin' to meh an' smile an' de man drop off... No, no, no,...I couldn't sleep whole night...No, no...'make reservation one time for Trinidad, yeahs. I can' take dat at all, at all, at all... I couldn' get over dat for months.

J: Ummhmm, so how old were you then?

P: Dat would have been 70..umh or 80. Yuh know it was 5 years an' I was 32. I couldn' take dat shock boy.

Comment: Phoebe went to the US Virgin Islands to search for her father and here she has gone to Venezuela where her maternal grandparents came from. She spoke Spanish and so she would have adjusted to the language reasonably quickly. However, she was not prepared for the sudden death of the judge and hurried back to Trinidad.

Phoebe has travelled a lot for a woman of her class. She has been to various islands as she took boats to the U.S. Virgin Islands. She has been to Venezuela to work as a domestic employee. So she has ventured far from the place of her birth, but these ventures seem to coincide with a search for her 'family'.

J: And have you been anywhere else?

P: No.

J: Just to Venezuela and St Thomas?

P: Well I pass t'rough Antigua and spend a week dere. I went to Tortolla too. I spent 2 weeks on Tortolla.

(Phoebe takes off her head tie)

J: You have got long hair?

P: Yeah...Well I was jus' combin' my hair when yuh call me to come out.

J: Right.

P: I now combin' my hair..

J: Doing the braids?

P: Yeahs .. cause I had it so, so..so I say look while I have it cool let me comb it an' have it ready. So I jus' put on meh hat (laughs).

Comment: Phoebe's hair was a reddish brown and wavy and she had it wrapped up in a towel that she jokingly calls her hat. She loves to make fun of mundane things like this. She has her hair done in braids (cane row) by her friend who works in the parlour. She does not wear her hair down but has it wrapped in a head tie.

J: That is very pretty and what are you going to do with it? Put the braids all around?

P: Yeahs I do it like dat. yuh see how I does comb it up? .

J: Oh I see, So this is the first part and you will push it out.

P: Yeahs.

J: What! Are you going out tonight?

P: Nuh. I will stay home, bed at 8:00 (laughs) Not meh tonight.

J: So what does your grandmother do at the weekend?

P: She will stay home an' pray with her rosary whole time. She can'...she doesn' want to go anywhere. She doesn' even want to come outside for a walk.

J: No?

P: Umhmmmn..She don' want to come out at all.

J: And what does she pray about?

P: Jus' pray, pray, pray...

J: So she keeps quiet. She is not one of those who bad talks..

P: No she don' but she jus' miserable. No she miserable, she don' curse. She hear a bad word an' she say...yuh hear dat, yuh hear dose demons...yuh hear, yuh hear (Pretends to whisper to imitate granny)..Prayers fall fast.

Comment: Phoebe's grandmother is a devout Catholic and so she spends a lot of her time praying for the things that she would want at this stage of her life. But Phoebe imitates her grandmother to illustrate a slice of life. As Phoebe points out, the prayers offered regarding bad language have a habit of falling down and this upsets her grandmother who sees this as the work of the devil.

J: Another round of the rosary for that. And where did she live before? Did she always live in the Beetham?

P: Yeahs..dey livin' down by..umh, dey had a tannery where de traffic bridge passin'. She was livin' with her mister an' he died here about...christmas comin' it will be t'ree years. So dat is why yuh see her down here.

Comment: The area where granny used to live was a slum clearance area and so granny and her partner were allocated this apartment in the pensioners' quarters.

J: And you came with her?

P: Yeahs. Dey was livin' together an' I don' know whether she had company.

J: Well, when you hear about this thing just up the way (I am referring to the murder on the block)

P: Yeahs, yeahs..

J: So you came with your cutlass?

P: (laughs) Good mornin', good evenin'.

Comment: Phoebe calls out to a woman who is passing and making a conversation with a few people who have gathered outside. This woman is known for her eccentricity or madness but she is a member of this community, she is seen as belonging. Here people seem to understand when those among them begin to show signs of mental collapse or instability. Younger people are not so tolerant and are inclined to make sport of an older person's derangement.

P: One name Maria (laughs)...She does drink an' cuss... oooh God! She could cuss.

J: I went to a few places today and I was amused because I went to one lady and she said...'but I have had my drinks already'..and she was just out of her mind...maybe that is the way to live? What am I doing running around on Saturday afternoon. And another lady said, that she wouldn't talk because she didn't have a history!

Comment: At this stage, I have been interviewing people for a few weeks and rumours and suspicions are beginning to spread like fire about what I am doing even though I have explained that I am looking at the history of women and I am going to write a book from the material I gather here. However, there is a growing concern about whether I might be working for the government or some foreign organization. This would not be East Port of Spain if there were not any number of rumours created by a white woman going around with a tape-recorder. Some women agreed to talk with me and then decided against it, other women wanted me to know that they would not talk about their personal life and one woman asserted that it was ridiculous to study women because they did not have a history and that women's lives did not matter in history. She also added that I could talk to her husband because he knew about history but there was no use talking to her. I also missed an interview with one woman because she was feuding with her mother at this time and as the mother had been talking to me, she (the daughter) would not talk to me.

Comment: The woman that was scheduled to talk with me at this time has come to say that she apologizes for not being able to make it. But she can hear Phoebe's laugh from the other end of the block and so she comes to introduce herself and make another time to talk to me.

Elizabeth: Good day.

J: Hi.

Elizabeth: It look so bad but when I takin' meh bamsie?

P: Look I comin'. Take care o' your han'. You are not in de hospital dey bring a stretcher for yuh? Dis Saturday is full on badness yuh see yuh have on a red skirt.

Diana: 'Have on yellow.

Comment: Phoebe is superstitious and regards wearing a red dress on a Saturday as taking an unnecessary risk.

P: Oooh Gosh, well it blen'in. So yuh now come down?

Diana: No I come down a good while actually but now a gentleman tell me yuh here an' I din' really want to stay but yuh know ..I know yuh here when I hear yuh laugh.

P: (laughs) I comin' jus' now, yeahs. I'm makin' a new friend here, eh.

Diana: I see.

J: Did you make your head tie?

Comment: One of the things that I noted as I talked with women was that they were very poor and yet they were generous to me. They say that the poor come with gifts to the rich and compared to every woman I interviewed I was extremely well off. Wherever I went people brewed special coffee (as my habit of drinking strong brewed coffee seemed common knowledge) some produced sweet drinks, biscuits and cake. A pensioner wanted to invite my husband and I to lunch so that she could show us how she could cook (she had been a domestic for all her working life). I know that some people made it very clear that I could be of some service to them but even apart from this, I was struck by the hospitality extended.

Diana: Yeahs, Yuh like it?.. I will bring one for you.

J: And what are you making there now?

Diana: No dese are diapers.. I puttin' dem to dry.

Comment: Diana is caring for her relative's child and she has daughters with children of their own. She has come from her parlour with washing in hand as she was scheduled to meet with me this same afternoon. At this time Compton and Hester are also thinking that Phoebe has had long enough.. so my two organizers are beginning to want a time schedule.

J: Well you have got the wrong day for it?

D: Yeah, de rain...OK..

P: Allright. Look, I show yuh a head tie I make...I comin'..

J: OK.

P: Look. Yeahs, I knit it. All de different ends of wool an' I decided to make a head tie.

J: How do you put that on?

P: I wrap it around (and she demonstrates)

J: Oh, I see, Because I was wondering why it was so long? But it makes it really nice. (The layers make a shape)

P: An look, I could wear it back.. yeahs (laughs)

J: There are so many different kinds of head-ties. Like when I was in Guadeloupe the women used to have long...

P: Dey tie from underneath an come up?

J: Yes, and they leave the bows out and they stick up so. And another one was on a square whereas this one is long like so. So I have been seeing different kinds of headties and wondering how to put them...And you just knit this one?

P: Ummmhmm Yeahs, with the crochet needle.

J: And that is how you get so many colours?

P: Yeahs...Yuh join dem together.

J: And this is the kind that you sell?

Comment: The kind of information that Phoebe gives me about her headties is explained in such detail that I could use it to take up a crochet needle and begin to apply the information. This is the kind of skill that would help initiate others to making headties relying on verbal instructions and actual demonstration of this art. As most of the crafts that women are involved in are learnt in an exchange of verbal information these lessons are part of an informal structure of education.

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MISTRESS FRANCIS ST.LAURENT

Personal Information

Name: Francis St.Laurent.
Age: 74 years,
Year of Birth: 1909
Address: Pensioners Quarters, Beetham Housing Estate.
(Formerly, John John)
Education: Primary. St Columbus R.C. School.
Housing: Government pensioners' quarters, rented.
Household Composition: single occupancy.
Unions: Miss Fielders had a series of friending relationships that resulted in 4 pregnancies. As a mature woman she entered a long term common law union with a stevedore (hence her title Miss Fielders) that ended when her partner died.
Number of Children:4 pregnancies: 3 abortions and one live birth. Her baby died (and the baby's father left soon after).
Number of Siblings: 1 brother in St Vincent (that she has never kept in touch with as he was left behind when her mother came to Trinidad). She had outside brothers and sisters on her father's side but they have 'died out' now.
Occupations: domestic employee: general, washer, ironer; vendor of food, confections, drinks, ice; healer.
Skills: Selling; nursing the sick; making herbal remedies; 'pulling' the cause of pain or sickness as a healer.
Financial Support: government pension, sale of ice and sweet drinks, cooking for a neighbour (male), taking in washing.
Emotional Support: Miss Fielders has friends in the country and some of the pensioners were her neighbours in John John before the fire. These neighbours also resided in the community centre while waiting for accommodation and this confinement led to a different pattern of co-operation and the sharing of a unique experience.
Support in Crisis: Government agencies (housing); network of friends; Servol (Miss Fielders has no family support)
Religion: Roman Catholic; Shango-Baptist?
Role or status within the church: Healer
Superstition: Belief in spirits as agents of illness.

Conversation Sequence

Date: July 11, 1983.

Comments by way of Introduction: Miss Fielders (also known as Franc is St Laurent) was reserved, dignified and upright as I had come to expect now on meeting most older women. My first impression was that she was full bodied even though her legs and arms were long and thin. When she bent down however, the reason for this fullness was evidently a stuffing of what looked to be paper. Later she volunteered that she kept her money on her person to keep it safe from would-be thieves.

On first meeting Miss Fielders her manners were formal and she did not initiate any part of the conversation. A combination of keeping distant and watching with suspicion being her way of guarding herself in our relationship. She was not a gregarious person and kept herself occupied in her little house. This attention to her house was plain to see as it was ordered, tastefully furnished and scrupulously clean. When people called on her she was cordial but it was generally understood that she was a nice lady. She avoided going outside and keeping to herself was a way of avoiding any possible tension or conflict associated with entering the public domain. She was 'quiet', she 'kept to herself', she was 'neat and tidy', she 'kept herself up'...she was a respectable person.

J: Which hospital? (Miss Fielders was born in Trinidad)

F: In dose days it was de colonial hospital but now it' de general.

J: That was way back when?

F: Well yes it was.. well 74 years I have.

Comment: Miss Fielders was born in 1909 during the colonial period. Trinidad Independence did not come until 1962 when Miss Fielders was 51 years old.

J: And where did you spend your early years?

F: Same place in Trinidad.

J: So you grew up in Trinidad?

F: Well I go to Columbus School. I'm Cat'olic.

J: You were Catholic? Are you Catholic still?

Comment: Miss Fielders does not practice catholicism and is reputed to be a healer in the community, which is usually linked with an Afro-Caribbean church, ie. Baptist or Shango. At her age and given her stature in the community church membership would be expected.

F: Yeah but sometimes I can' go to church for de place where I live is a' environment place...'can' come out as I like.

J: No? You have got to look after your things?

F: Yeah.

J: Are you alone here?

F: Yeah. Yuh can' move inside of here at all.

Comment: Miss Fielders is extremely conscious of the dangers of her neighbourhood and does not like to leave her quarters. She sees her environment as imposing limits on her freedom to come and go as she would please. She has taken many precautions like adding burglar proofing, placing several extra locks on her doors and installing a fluorescent light so that she can see clearly. Her fear of 'rastas'[411] will be emphasized repeatedly throughout our conversation. Her quarters were partitioned into little rooms which is one indication of Shango as different rooms are given over to different (conflicting) deities.

J: Did you go to school as a little girl?

F: Yeah, go to school St Columbus.

J: And how many years did you spend at school?

F: Well I spend about ..around about... in my girl days about 14 years...about 12... about 12. As everyt'ing, sometimes I go an' sometimes I ain' able to go because my mother was poor, see. An' she had to fight to go an' look for work.. To help myself I had to come out from school early. In de early days.. Yeahs, I had to go an' look for a little work an' help she for my mother was sick an' she was unable. An' she come an' she died.

Comment: This answer to a question about schooling was common among the women I talked to. Education was a luxury among the *poor and so attendance depended on the circumstances at home in a community where children were needed and involved in the work that was done for the household. School was a place with a very different set of values to those of the home and this highlighted being-different, being-ignorant and being-poor. The world of the classroom exposed the child to insults, humiliations and biases. For the lower-class child the education for her world was informal and not written down. Her education was etched into her consciousness by the same circumstances that pulled her away from the classroom. This is not to say that education was not important. Most uneducated Trinidadians would be confirmed in their lower class livelihoods by accepting the values of educated elitism. Education is prized by all classes of the community.*

J: How old were you then?

F: When my mother died I was 16.

Comment: Education for young girls in the early part of the century was often in conflict with requirements in the household. Some mothers recognized the link between education and social mobility but for most poor households the advantages of an education were outweighed by practical concerns of daily survival.

J: And so you were helping her and she was sick for a long time?

F: Yeahs. Well she died an' I had 16 years.

J: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

F: Well I had one brother. I don' know if he alive or if he dead because my mother was a Vincentian...born in St. Vincent. So she come here a girl an' she made me. My father he come an' he die about when I was 7 years old.

Comment: Miss Fielders's mother had a different father for each child (one in St. Vincent and one in Trinidad). Male-female relationships were usually only made permanent after economic stability and security were achieved at some later stage in life. For the immigrant woman without the familiar support structure of her native St Vincent, this goal would have been very difficult to achieve before she had established a modus vivendi in Trinidad. This was sometimes facilitated by trading youth for a home by entering a sexual liaison with an older man from the local community.

J: So it was you and your mother alone?

F: Yeahs. My auntie would help us an' so yuh know. Den I come to get a good size young lady..

Comment: Miss Fielders grew up among female relatives as her mother came to Trinidad from St Vincent and her father died when Miss Fielders was only 7. If her mother had been ambitious enough to migrate to Trinidad, then it is very likely that she would have encouraged her daughter to progress if that was at all possible.

(Someone comes to buy ice from Miss Fielders's fridge)

Dat won' obstruct yuh (to the male customer)..De lady tapin' me.

J: You are making ice?

F: Yeah, I have a fridge.

J: Not everyone has a fridge? You make it for those who have no fridge?

F: Yeah

Comment: The fridge is an indication that Miss Fielders had money enough to buy this piece of capital as this fridge is not for her domestic use alone, it is far too large. The fridge is for making ice and storing drinks and food to sell. And because she is dealing with the public, she is being paid in cash. Her chest is bolstered by notes and she is likely to have retained her cash this way when the John John residence was destroyed by fire.

F: Yuh see what cause me to live in dis place is I got burn' out.

J: Oh, you were in John John.

F: Yeahs..1978, big fire an' it take everyt'ing dat I have.

Comment: Miss Fielders communicates a lot through the art of gesturing. She adopts a pose [illegible]ommunicate the extent of her loss and there is no need for words, the gesture says it all. To talk to Miss Fielders is not to listen to her words alone but to be part of her communication style. Each person I spoke to had this 'story telling' posture as they began to open up and speak from their own points of reference.

J: You lived in the Centre after that?

F: Yeahs. I lived in de centre 3 years an' 6 months.

J: So you know Miss Luzana?

F: All about, yeahs, all of us.. Of everyt'ing I have not'in' everyt'ing burn'. Dese is fresh new t'ings a friend help me to try to buy. Fresh new t'ings. Not a livin' t'ing I had.

Comment: The quality of Miss Fielders's furniture is superior to all the other pensioners' furniture and she has more of it. Her house is immaculately kept. Friends have helped her to gather this new furniture and so it would seem that her friends are able to be generous and have taken excellent care of these items passed on to Miss Fielders.

I find out that the chairs and curtains have come from Miss Elizabeth, a fire victim herself who has recently bought a new dining and loungeroom set from her carpentering neighbour. Miss Elizabeth's husband was from one of the small islands and they were neighbours in John John.

J: You were in the house at the time?

F: I came out. Because de house dat I was livin' in I was seein' about a sick woman nex' door. An' after everyt'ing I was cookin' an' it was I who first see de fire but I didn' thought it would reach quite up here an' I saw de smoke an' when it comin' up I look an' I start to bawl 'fire, fire' an' wid dat yuh start to see everybody come out an' it start to see different tanks where dey had gas.. FUZZZZ..an' it fly out an' ...

Comment:Here again Miss Fielders gestures how the tanks exploded and spread the fire from gas tank to gas tank. Her hands and facial expressions amplify her intentions along with changes in tempo for added emphasis.

J: They all exploded. It started off with little children playing with gas.

F: Yeahs..dey makin' some mango t'ing to sell.

Comment: These children were engaged in making mango chutney to sell. I had wrongly used the term 'playing' as I thought that this would be appropriate to describe children's cooking. But I have introduced my bias as these children were producing something to sell and that is serious business in an environment where mangos would not be wasted in 'play' and where the use value of children does not go unnoticed. These children were 'working' to bring money into the family economy.

F: Everyt'ing I have burn' to ashes an' dat night I had to sleep at somebody else. Not'ing..no place. Until after...I stay in de centre dere for so long dey come an' give us over here...but I don' like over here.

J: It's not like before.

F: Yeahs. In here is no good. In here no good at all.

J: I hear that some old lady near here was badly bashed up one time.

F: Yeahs. Inside..dey strangle her.

J: They strangled her?

F: Yeahs, dat is why I would like to get some place away from here. I don' like it here... don' mind I will be able to pay a little rent. Yeahs man about $30 a month I pay. Don' mind I still poor I can go to a little office an' sweep...but I don' like it here.

J: You are still able to do that?

F: Yeahs.

Comment: Miss Fielders is so afraid as her neighbour's death was extremely violent and it was believed that this action was an attempt to rob this woman and stop her from pursuing a legal battle over the sale of her house. This knowledge intensifies Miss Fielders's anxiety as the pensioners' quarters are inhabited by older people, without phones and without strength. Government planning placed the elderly in a block away from traditional support structures within their neighbourhoods together with their families. So this ghetto of old age pensioners, predominantly women, is somewhat artificial and alienating for the residents. And older people do not speak out to police officers as they fear for their own safety. The police are not traditionally the friends of the poor but the instruments of enforcement of the status quo.

J: You don't get on well with your neighbours.. or they don't help?

F: Yeahs, neighbours is allright. Everybody here nice. It' de rastas dat come in. Dey ain' good at all...

Comment: This is said in a whisper..fearing that we might be overheard by curious strangers outside. The rastas congregate at a local parlour built next to her house. The parlour usually remains closed during the day (when Miss Fielders does her trade among her neighbours) and opens at 3.00 p.m. It is common knowledge among Beetham residents that the parlour owner was responsible for a dockside murder but was not convicted on account of there being insufficient evidence. This does not help Miss Fielders's nerves as other people have been warned to stop selling drinks as this is competition for the parlour. Jessica was told that if she was going to sell drinks, she would have to go into town to sell...so Jessica has gone back to prostitution.

J: They say that they were smoking up an' their heads went funny.

F: Don' mind dem dey lookin' for dat an' I ain' able wid dese people at all. I don' like to see what is goin' on aroun' here. Every night I sleep with a dread.

Comment: The young people gathering to smoke marijuana at night creates anxiety among the older people who are not familiar with this drug and it is often said that the people gathering at the parlour make a lot of noise and that fights often erupt. The younger people in turn, complain that the older folk are given to drunken behaviour and hurling verbal insults complete with vulgar explicatives. It is clear that tension exists as a result of this new grouping in the neighbourhood and that most pensioners are afraid for their safety.

Only recently, an older woman threw a pot of boiling water over her daughter when she returned from the parlour and was abusive to her mother for with-holding money. The older residents responded with sympathy towards the old woman and some said that it is better for the young woman to die than live like that and be giving her mother such botheration and worries. Some said that it was too hard on the mother to be always quarrelling with the unemployed girl who had become addicted to cocaine but had few ways of financing her habit without bringing shame on her family (mother) and taking all the money that her mother had.

J: That is a shame isn't it? So you have been living here since 19..

F: Since 1981...I done livin' 2 years here.

J: So if we go back to the time when you first left school... What did you do when you first left school?

F: Well... I look for work... I was workin' out.

J: What.. in houses or in a bakery or what?

F: No, I work by people, but I can' remember de name now but I work out by different places.. maid, market, cook, clean out house.

Comment: Miss Fielders was a maid. This lowly station was usually accompanied by a very hefty job description as maids performed all those tasks that middle class people identified as being beneath their station or menial. It is often said that a middle class person could not partake of a glass of water unless it was presented on a tray and tinkling with ice-cubes. The verity of such tales may be questioned but the idea behind the tale would have us believe that maids did the menial tasks and were made very aware of the distance between themselves and their employers. These boundaries were kept with a vigilance similar to that demonstrated by Miss Fielders's watch over her own material possessions now.

J: And where was this...Was it in Port of Spain?

F: No, it was some place down Diego Martin, some place I work Charlotte Street, I work Henry Street.. different people nuh, different places.

J: Always in the Port of Spain area?

F: Yeahs in Port of Spain an' den I work in de country-side.

J: And when did you move to John John?

F: When I move John John? I lived dere for 26 years an' 3 in de place an' dat make 29 years.

Comment: Miss Fielders moved to John John in the 50's when she was in her 40's. As a mature person she had become friendly with a stevedore and entered a stable relationship that lasted until his death. As a maid she would live in at her place of employment but she had friends in Sealots or the Shantytown area.

J: So you really became a John John girl?

F: But I did rather up dere yuh know for dere better dan here. I, Luzana, Lee an' 2 others livin' here but de other one dat move wid us had to move out.. she gone to de mad house.

J: Maybe it was just too much for her?

F: Yeahs, Yeahs, she take it on an' she get dizzy an' she get stupidy-like an' she walkin' an' she walkin' away... But I still try my best... I stan' up like a Great Britain..Yeahs.. I hold on. I held on de place where I was livin' an' I said I wouldn' move until dey give me somewhere. Well I sorry dat I get here. Too much of young people here at night an' too much of bad t'ings. Dey robbin' people an' if dey ain' get dey mashin' up an' burnin' people's place. I ain' able.

Comment: It always struck me as remarkable that people were so resilient in the face of such desperate circumstances. However, there were not a few people, old and young, wandering the streets and sleeping under the stars. I had come to expect to see unkempt haunted figures in certain places, but I had grown accustomed to them just as I had grown accustomed to the corbeaux and the stench along the Beetham highway coming into Port-of-Spain. Madness among the poor was defined as 'taking it on' as there were always privations and conflicts. But the poor define madness in cultural terms and see the breaking point as being that time when a person gives in to the persistent pressure by mental withdrawal or behaving 'stupidy-like'.

One of the more unpleasant aspects of persistent unemployment is when apathy turns to aggression on an identified group of people of a different class. When a break-in is thwarted by lack of valuable or salable items to steal, the youths vandalize the house and in some cases, set the house on fire. This outcome might also take place when valuables are found but it is understood that frustrated thieves destroy those houses where their labour has been in vain. This pattern has historical antecedents in slave rebellions and guerrilla styled activities against those who exploited slaves's labour. This was a way of levelling or redress.

The guerrilla style has turned pathological when the victim of violence comes from the same 'side' as it were. When the *guerrilla has become a force unto himself or herself. Such individualism instills the pensioner with a crippling fear and promotes a new dimension of alienation and terror in a ghetto of old age.*

J: They are doing that?

F: Not right here. but dat is what dey are doin'. Out of work, walk' about interferin' wid people an' all of dat.

I make chil'ren an' dey die.

J: How many children did you make?

F: I make about 4..3 abortions an' one dat live but he died.. I made him in 1928.

J: He lived for a little while?

F: No, he was a baby an' he got sick an' t'ing.

Comment: Miss Fielders did not have family to help her with her children and so this would have made children something of a burden. This is explained as she goes on.

J: So now you've got nobody an' you say you don't even know where your brother is?

F: Yeahs. He in St.Vincent, but he don' look up me, he don' write me.. He don' write me, he don' write me, he don' write me...

Comment: Miss Fielders may have learnt to read and write but it is entirely possible that her brother in St Vincent was not freed from his chores to attend school as boys were usually occupied during school hours unless parents were particularly keen to send their children to school.

Repetition of a point to be emphasized is a very common pattern of speech. The words are usually said 3 or 4 times on a descending scale bring the pitch back to the person's normal speaking pitch.

J: Who have you been living with or looking after?

F: Well no, I haven' got nobody, I mus' fight for m'self. I does do m' little t'ings I have to do an' I does get m' pension an' sell a little few t'ings.

Comment: Miss Fielders is very resourceful after fending for herself over an extended period, especially in her very isolated youth as the daughter of an immigrant woman of failing health. She has learnt to draw on her resources as circumstances change. So as a pensioner she continues to earn a little extra and keep herself up.

J: Do you get somet'ing from Servol as well?

F: De Servol. Dem don' min' me. I went when I firs' come here an' I went an' ask' dem for two chairs.. dey say dey would send em an' dey never.. never come an' look 2 years gone. I fight an' get all dese little t'ings for m'self. Yeah, I fight my way all..

Miss Elizabeth gave me dis one an' dat one.

J: Mistress Simpson gave you these here? They are good an' strong.

Comment: Miss Elizabeth has recently refurnished her house as a neighbour is a carpenter. (And carpenters are seeing a very difficult time at this point as unemployment is on the increase and people are not building or replacing things. Max Senhouse and American Stores and such like are importing cheap furniture that is very popular in Trinidad.) So the furniture that Miss Fielders has is quite well cared for as Miss Elizabeth is very careful with her things and prides herself in being very clean and tidy in her house. Miss Elizabeth is also Mistress Simpson and as a respectable married lady and a Baptist who has a vested interest in family values. She is extremely conscious of her capacity for hard work and cleanliness in the home.

F: An' after a while I get dis too.

J: And then you have got your fridge?

F: Yeah, I take out[412] dat because I use' to sell an' after .. I use' to have.. I had nice t'ings in m' house.

J: What kinds of things did you sell?

F: Well yuh can' sell inside here because it have no place to sell. All de sellin' is to de front. If I have to sell I have to go outside an' I come an' make m' little t'ings.

Comment: Miss Fielders is speaking rather loud and so this message is not so much for me as it is for anyone outside who may be listening. Some of her neighbours run the parlour and those who do business that might compete with the parlour have been warned to stop. This warning would hardly be posed without a threat of some kind as asking people to close down a means of gaining income is no simple matter.

J: What kind of things do you make?

F: Well sometimes I make little tamarind ball'[413] .. all kin' of t'ings man.

J: You put them all in bottles and set up a table?

F: Yeahs.

J: And how did you do that?

F: Well I was doin' dat for about 5 years in John John... an' after de fire broke out I couldn' sell again.

J: Were you a pensioner then?

F: Ummh. I didn' too long start to get pension. Cause when I was young I went up here to live.

J: How young?

F: Well I was about 36 all around dere... somewhere around dere.

J: Had you had all your children by then?

F: Yeahs, I make dem...I make one, one los', I get another one.. When I tell yuh about makin' babies dey go, so I have to burden dat for myself. It a shame but dat de fashion. Make dey fashion an' den dey gone about deir business an leave me in de heat. De las' one I make it was allright, de father use' to see about me with dat. Dat one born but he dead. De chil' dead an den me an' de mister separate.

Comment: Miss Fielders did not have a stable relationship and so there were different partners who fathered her children. She *talks of the practice of friending as being the 'fashion' as most children were conceived outside of marriage and before women were able to survive on their own economically or emotionally after a child was born. She refers to pregnancy as being left in the 'heat'. Miss Fielders 'had it' on her own because her mother was an immigrant and by the time Miss Fielders was having babies her mother was ill or had passed away.*

J: Was he from John John?

F: No.. no.. when I make dat I wasn' livin' up dere ... It was de early days den. Yeah, early days.

(Just now I am doin' some cookin' now..)

J: Was your father Trinidadian?

F: Oh no, he was from outside.

J: Was he from St Vincent?

F: No... My father' mother an' dem does belong to Cariacou. Different nuh, an' de families mix together. I don' know de family but I meet one or two since dey come over here, yuh know. No, I meet one or two jus' around de place an' dey make certain introductions an' dey tell me. Look your family, dis is yours, dat is yours but otherwise he die early an' leave me so he couldn' carry me over to see dem, I was too small.

J: Just 5 years old?

F: About 6 / 7 when he died.

J: And what did your father do?

F: My father? He use' to work at de Royal Mail.. Dose days he was a watchman. Dat is when de Royal Mail was in full swing... yuh hear about dat. De Royal Mail was all de mails an' he had to go an' pack up an' he watch dat.

Comment: Miss Fielders is making it quite clear that her father was a man of some consequence in those days. He was employed to watch the 'Royal Mail' not just some post office or other. The Royal Mail in Victorian Trinidad was coupled with importance and *prestige. He held a responsible position watching the letters of the literate class and many of these would have been 'On Her Majesty's Service'.*

F: He come an' he get sick an' he died too... but I can' remember de year. My father name was Frank...Frank St. Laurent.

J: So you were called Francis after him?

F: Francis yeahs... Yeahs, Francis St. Laurent, but he was Frank. He had many other brothers yuh know.

But he was a sailor before he got dat work... but he was a young man an' he met my mother. An' yuh know, he ain' married but he stay with her an' he was a watchman an' I had two sisters but not by my mother, dat was by another lady but dey died an' leave me alone.

Comment: Miss Fielders talks very openly about her father's children by a woman other than her mother. It was very common for men to have outside children and sailors were sometimes greeted by a family at every port. It was also common for the mothers to care for their children with occasional 'help' from the father. Children were and are women's burdens within this class.

J: But your father's brothers are all in Cariacou?

F: Well dat die out...all dem dead.

J: So you grew up without family?

F: I grow wid my mother an' my aunt.

Comment: I have always been checked when I have slipped into defining family in patriarchal terms. Or just when I get used to an idea of extended families I am made to realise that family is mother, aunt and child. That should be obvious and it is on reflection but I am haunted by a stereotype that has dad and a few more children in there somewhere. Miss Fielders grew up with family.

J: Did your mother live by the aunt?

F: Well she live with she but after she sick an' everyt'ing..

J: So they must have been hard times?

F: Well in dose days t'ings wasn' so bright. De work wasn' so... money wasn' passin' so much so yuh can' compare. T'ings were not so dead as now. De money was small but t'ings was good. In dose days yuh get a tin of milk for 6c...rice, penny a poun', 2 poun' for 5c an' all of dat.., but yuh see, not now.. time to time, to time goes on an' it raise up.. you could say.. I want a penny of mix meat.. yuh get a piece of saltfish, a piece of dis a piece of dat a piece of de other an' yuh get a big bundle jus' for a penny.

Comment: Most women I talked to were able to remember the prices of an array of items from their shopping list. Cost of living is a very concrete phenomenon for the poor woman and food prices are etched into their memories. This was the most common indicator of time; food prices.

Inflation of wages and prices has been very dramatic since Independence and particularly in the 70's when oil prices made for prosperity and a 'money no object' outlook among Trinidadians. The effect this has had on lower class Trinidadians on fixed incomes or involved in the informal economic sector has led to a sense of uncertainty and of powerlessness with having to change with the times. The feminization of poverty among the elderly is as much a part of this community as it is in other countries. However, among women who have had to be self-sufficient and responsible for their families in all their working lives there is generally a creative response to this problem.

J: If you did that today they would just laugh at you.

F: Meat in de market dose days was 4c a poun' when yuh ask for de bes' it was 6c a poun' but not now. everyt'ing high sky! When I was a little girl ochroes a big pile was for a cent but now 3 or 4, a dollar!

J: You go to the market on Sunday?

F: Yeahs [illegible] get 5 for 2 dollars, 6 for 2 dollars which is 3 for a dollar.

J: All you have got is 6 ochroes and $2 gone.

F: Yeahs, yuh jus' make a little do 'cause yuh can' eat de food all yuh want yuh want. We accustom' to we good little food uneconomic...

But yuh try to eat good an' live long.

Comment: The high value placed on food and diet is captured in Miss Fielders's simple statement, as much philosophy as fact ..'eat good an' live long'. Among people who are no strangers to hunger the centrality of food cannot be underestimated and the pot is tended with care.

J: You have lived to this age so you must have looked after yourself well.

F: I never use to go to dance... I like my little dancin' an' t'ing. I like my nice dress... don' mind you go to tailor, don' mind de t'ings was cheap but I use' to dress nice, go to parties go to weddin's stay for babies an' all dat. I use' to make m'self look nice.

Comment: The women in this neighbourhood may be poor, but all of them stressed that they must have their nice clothes to go out in. Miss Fielders mentions that she gets her clothes made to look nice. Presentation of self is valued in spite of the cost to these women.

The social occasions mentioned here are 'respectable' and identified as consistent with women's place and values. To go dancing in public domains is not approved of by church women and likewise, dressing in style is replaced by long shapeless attire in equally unexciting colours. For women who like their fetes and their fashionable clothes, this proves something of a stumbling block in their religious advancement.

J: So you don't go to dances again?

F: No I don' do dat now. Yuh can' go out.. Yuh can' even go out after six.

J: You are too frightened?

F: No.. but de people here ain' good. Yuh can' go out to stay long outside. No yuh can' go out.

J: So you just sit around here?

F: Yeah.. I jus' go in m' bed..

Sometimes in de mornin' I wake quarter to t'ree but I don' go out I clean aroun' here.

J: That must be something a lot of people do because I know lots of people who say they go to bed early, wake up at about 3 or 4 and do their little housework in the cool. It must be a habit from a long time ago .. is it?

F: Yeahs..since I was a girl. Yuh know it have girls like to lay down whole day Sundays ... Never. I get up early an' yuh see what happen I use' to do plenty work. I use' to be a washer an' 'wash clothes for white people an' iron...firs' starch den iron.

Comment: The older women I talked to were used to going to bed with the sun. Most of these women would have been expected to arrive at work early in the mornings and so they would often get up early to clean out their own houses, wash and prepare for their household before walking to work some distance in the cool of approaching dawn. This routine continues and in households where many people share confined quarters the older folk sleep while the younger ones watch TV, visit friends, go to the cinema or rum parlour. Then they rise early to clean out and begin food preparation. Some folk even call on neighbours at this time...but not Miss Fielders as she is alert to the possible dangers outside. Many older women suggest that this an ideal time to say prayers to keep them free from fear and to ward off any evil that might be around after the night.

J: And so with washing and ironing you could get several places to do that?

F: Yeahs...Dat was my work when I was young.

J: And how long ago was that?

F: For aroun' about ..20 years ago, 15 years... I have to let go for yuh see I catch cold. It could bring yuh cripple. If yuh don' let go it would cripple yuh. I would have been mash up.

Comment: Washer women were all agreed that the main hazard of their work was catching cold. The work was physically hard and would probably have caused injuries due to the strain of scrubbing and heavy lifting. These women would work with scrubbing board, soap and bleach to launder white cotton shirts, linen and garments in a climate where the middle class person changed 3 times daily. Repeated strain injuries would have had a crippling effect on washer women, accustomed as they were to hard physical labour.

J: Right, because your hands have got no arthritis.

F: No. De onliest t'ing dat I does suffer with is a little pressure.

J: You have pressure too?

Comment: There were very few women who did not have high blood pressure. This is such a common problem where the high proportion of salt in the diet has become customary. A year after this conversation Miss Fielders died of a heart attack. But it was also rumoured that her chest was flat when she was discovered, so high blood pressure may have only been part of the cause of the heart attack that appears as the official cause of her demise.

F: Ummm. Well I does drink bush an' t'ing an' sometimes I does go to doctor. Only to see me heart for I does take my medicine an' drink.. For yuh can' live without seein' a doctor... Yuh have to see dat.

J: But you have your own medicine too?

F: Yeah. I make my different remedy an' t'ing.

J: You boil up the leaves and things?

F: Yeahs.

J: And what is good for pressure?

F: For pressure yeahs ..dat is de problem. Sometimes I take a little epsom salts in m' tea.. take a little molasses as dat does be good. I make.. well like a beverage.

J: So you have a purge?

F: Yuh see when de bowels aren' workin' dat will kill yuh. If your bowels are goin' it will keep you.

Comment: There is particular concern about the functioning of the bowels in this section of the community and here Miss Fielders underlines the importance in very direct terms. The frequent use of laxatives to evacuate the alimentary system and 'cleanse' the body is a topic that features prominently in conversations. This practice has taken on a 'cure all' effect or first line of attack against any ailment.

J: Because everybody does that around here?

F: When yuh get ol' an' t'ing yuh have to take some purge. If yuh see de pressure up yuh know it could kill yuh, yuh know. It take people down all de time.[414] Yuh see when I was a little girl m' mother use' to treat me. When I was in school an' t'ing de doctor say I have high blood pressure. I have high blood when I was little de doctor tell me dat.

J: But you seem to have been coping allright so far?

F: Yeah, dat blood always come an' when de sun hot I jus' feel me' (points to her nose)

Comment: Miss Fielders has suffered with nose bleeding in the past. She indicated that these bleeds were quite frequent. From the drift of this conversation, Miss Fielders links nose bleeding and menstruation with high blood pressure. It is common among women to have the theory that high blood pressure is caused by a surplus of blood which needs to be eliminated from the body. The elimination of blood in childbirth is seen as the most significant way to reduce the risk of blood pressure in later years. Some women report that their high blood pressure is to be expected as they did not have enough children, eg. only 6 or 7.

J: What about when you were a teen-ager?

F: Well de same t'ing I still bleed.. Well I had plenty of dat. Plenty blood I had. When I went to de doctor an' I tell de doctor dat it comin' down too much...he said, well dat would pass. For yuh see how I young because I had it since I was 14 years... after dat when I went back to de doctor.. it was heavy, heavy, heavy, heavy.. an' when I went to de doctor it stopped so I tell de doctor, well I say, it was really comin' down for t'ree days. He say, you're in perfec' healt' man. He say it remain until I come ol' den somet'ing could be done.

J: This was before you had the miscarriages and things?

F: Yeah, dis was before.

J: What about after?

F: Well after, same t'ing, it stay de same t'ree days 'til it stop.

J: When did it stop? How old were you then?

F: Well I was about 45.

Comment: Women often say that a 'doctor' gave them misinformation about the etiology of blood pressure. In this case the 3 days of bleeding would seem to coincide with menstruation if the onset was at age 14 and the cessation was at age 45. It strikes some as odd that women of this class would be ignorant about menstruation as it is believed that with an overwhelming lack of privacy and an attitude that sexual intercourse is not only natural but health giving or sustaining, that information relating to bodily functions would be readily accessible. This is not the case and from what I have been told, it would seem that women are given misinformation more often than they are given correct information and that it is more likely that on seeing the first signs of menstrual bleeding a girl will merely be shown what to do to arrest the flow before it soils clothes and furniture. She might also be warned to keep herself away from boys and men for any number of dire consequences will surely follow and so misinformation is used again to control behaviour. Terms like hormones, ovulation, menstrual cycle and the like were never used. It was only necessary to link this bleeding with health and lack of it with 'trouble' of one kind or another. Menstrual bleeding fits nicely into the theory of surplus blood and at the end of this cyclic bleeding the dangers of high blood pressure ~~must be~~ checked by purging.

J: That made you dizzy?

F: Yeahs, well dat is why de doctor say I should'a sleep more

J: How is that?

F: He say that it stop because my heart' plenty blood.

J: So that is what is causing all the blood pressure to rise?

F: (She nods).. Let me take a look at dis pot.

J: What is it?..chicken?

F: Yeahs, I shouldn' use so much of salt.

J: No, salt is not good for pressure.

F: No.

Comment: Even though women with high blood pressure are warned about the dangers of seasoning their pot with salt, they do not heed the warning. Food without a heavy hand of salt is 'tasteless' and besides, high blood pressure is linked with too much blood not too much salt. There is a need for public education on this issue.

J: And what is this, have you got something down your front?

F: Yeahs, ...I does put m' little purse in m' bosom.

J: Oh, I see, you don't leave it around for people to get?

F: No dey would have to kill me.

J: They would have to kill you first? Are they that bad?

F: Oooh. I don' know (silence).

J: I guess when you are alone you just have to look after yourself?

F: Yeahs... when I alone I sit down, or I go by a neighbour an' chat wid her.

J: Is she a pensioner too?

F: Ummhmm. Yuh see dey put pensioners in here to live.

J: So what part of John John were you in.. High up on the hill?

F: Yeahs, I was quite up almost under de two tanks it had.. up on top dere.

J: Because Mrs. Lee has a daughter up there still, up Beverly Hill right near the tanks.

F: I din' know dat?

J: So that was plenty of walking for you?

F: Oh Lord, I get accustom' to dat.

'Cause de fire didn' reach up, it reach ha'f way past my house an' up another place an' it meet another house. Yuh see, I was out when de fire come I had to go to de front an' de state of de tap by our back ..(She motions the dismal performance of the tap as a producer of any volume of water)

It went so fas' it come like it walkin'. It picked up a lot of houses before, yeahs.

J: About how many houses?

F: Plenty houses an' de fire make a circle all about...

Couldn' get water.

Comment: The people in this area were living in houses or shacks that were built without any forethought for utilities such as sanitation, electricity or water. Most of the houses were made from materials found on the La Basse. The most popular shacks were called 'Datsunvilles' because the boxes from these imported cars formed the the greater part of the house. So when the fire started, there was no water to extinguish the blaze even though there were storage tanks at the top of the hill for the Port of Spain water supply.

J: No! So they couldn't put it out. and in the meantime all the gas tanks were exploding?

F: Many people were about deir business. Some gone out.

J: Because I know that Mistress Lang was working?

F: I was up dere livin'...

J: So she couldn't get into the house to save anything.

F: No, no, no...everybody was busy. Some people was out an' some was in. Even stuff dat yuh put outside, somebody carry dem or you get burnt. Dat was my idea. Dey ain' lookin' to help you.

J: They are only looking to steal.

F: To steal yeahs..

J: So you save it so that somebody else could carry it?

F: That is why I have nothin'.

Comment: The fire victims all maintain that the things that they managed to save from their houses had to be watched from the outside so as to prevent thieves from carrying things away. Hence the comment here that to stay inside and save things was only to 'get burned'. Any image of co-operation and a bond of caring among the poor is shown up as nonsense when disasters of this kind are remembered not so much for the help and comfort in times of distress but the looting and scavenging among the ruins by those who rushed to the scene to help themselves under the cover of aiding the distressed.

J: Oh my. So when did you start vending?

F: To sell? I was about...is only about 7 years. But when I was up on de hill it was somewhere aroun' 19.. I went dere to live about 19..54. Somewhere aroun' dere. I use' to sell by Sealot an' den I get sick an' couldn' sell again.

J: Was that from pressure that you got sick?

F: No. Rain wet me..rain wet me.

J: Rain wet you?

F: Yeahs, an' den after I get fever an' t'ing, cold. I had de pressure yeahs. An' den after dat I came an' I start to sell an' I start doin' a little clothes again. I was always sellin'.. I start doin' a little ironin' an' washin' ... not for white people, for ordinary people yuh know... for bachelors an' I stop' about 19..78... An' aroun' '76 I start back an' I start to sell again.. I sell about 3 times. Put it down, pick it up, put it down, pick it up, put it down...

J: That is something that you have always had?

F: Yeahs.

Comment: Many women have skills and knowledge that they can draw on when they need to be self reliant. Miss Fielders has been able to sell things when this became necessary. She does not do this unless circumstances require it. If she is in a relationship with a man who brings money in for her, then she does not have to worry with other things. A woman's status is elevated among other women if she has the choice to remain inside her home and attend to family matters as the 'lady of the house'.

J: And you say you were looking after an old lady?

F: Yeahs. I used to see about she. She wasn' old.

J: No?

F: She was a sick woman. A young woman but she get sick.

J: So she couldn't look after herself?

F: No. After de fire an' t'ing dey bring she down. People take she out of de house when de fire come.. dat was me neighbour. Take she out when de fire...an' brought she down.

J: Was she in the centre too?

F: No, no. Dey get a house in de Beetham. But I didn' get any because I didn' know what was goin' on . I didn' e'n know it had houses to go in.

J: So she got a house in the Beetham? And you couldn't go to look after her?

F: No... I didn' go back because she had some family an' dat seein' about her. But I remain in de centre. De centre was allright but is only I used to have everyt'ing to eat an' drink an' people use' to help her an' bring t'ings for her. So with dat now, everyt'ing was allright. De onliest t'ing was de house. So yuh see, dey couldn' get to put me in a big house. Dey lookin' for one home so dey get dis now an' dey put me in dat. Me ain' like here. It convenient yuh know...pipe an' everyt'ing inside yuh know.

Comment: There has been some comment about the fact that after the fire Miss Fielders did not go to visit the sick woman that she had looked after for so long. This puzzled her friends. However, Miss Fielders indicated that the woman was with family and that they had a place in the Beetham (some distance from the centre). Her main concern was that the sick woman was allright. Miss Fielders suffered from the trauma of the fire, of being stripped of her belongings, of not having a house or being in a position to care for her neighbour. The trauma of the fire has left Miss Fielders with a fear of leaving her possessions and going outside.

For a woman who has shared a pipe in the yard and a toilet outside, the convenience of running water and a toilet inside comes second to the luxury of privacy. So although there is the element of danger here, there is also this advantage of being able to conduct her ablutions and sit on the toilet without going outside and without having to share the facilities. It is difficult to overemphasize what this means to someone who has never had an 'inside' toilet and washbasin.[415]

J: The bathroom is inside too? and the little wash house just out the back?

F: Yeahs.

J: So it is convenient ..and the market is just here so...

F: Yeahs, de market.

J: How often do you go to the market...just on Sunday?

F: Well sometimes I go once a week.. Every week, once a week I go an do me little message so I don' have to run out. I have everyt'ing inside.

J: Right. And then you can keep yourself cool for the rest of the week?

Comment: Miss Fielders makes constant reference to issues of security. Here again she talks of wanting to gather her 'messages' and get everything inside so that she does not have to venture out. She arranges her visit to the market in such a way that she goes out only once and brings everything home. The

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fridge makes this scheme possible. Most pensioners do not have a fridge and so they have to do their shopping for perishable food regularly or else live on dried or salted foods.

F: Yeahs... I don' like Sunday market. I like to have everyt'ing inside one time an' come home an' cook early.

J: Do you just cook for yourself?

F: No...I alone.

J: Just you alone?

F: Hmm hmm. Cookin' for nobody, jus' me alone. Now money hard an' t'ings is dead. 'Cause if yuh go cookin' for people yuh hear dey cry an' is I who loss... I wouldn' be gainin' anyt'ing.

J: They want it for nothing?

F: (laughs) I buy sometime, chicken with peas.. I can' cook for people. I have everyt'ing for myself, jus' me alone but when a friend come from far far den we have lunch..yuh see.

Comment: Some women 'board' people by providing meals for a fee. However, Miss Fielders knows that these arrangements are often more to the benefit of the customer than the provider as prices are increasing and the customer is not always able to pay. This can mean tensions and a woman can gain a reputation of being miserable or mean for her trouble. At least, this is what Miss Fielders implies. She prefers to make tamarind balls and such-like where she can charge a set price for item.[416]

J: Right, right. So you have friends from the country?

F: Well yuh see now, anybody have a friend..it doesn' matter if dey unable an' t'ing many friends well seem to find me here.

J: Were you sick?

F: No, no..Sick! After de fire when I was up inside de centre many people come an' give me a little aid. Yeah, people come an' help me.

Comment: Miss Fielders values her friends and will offer them something from her pot when they have come some distance to see her. And she explains that this reciprocity between friends has helped her to rebuild after the devastation of the fire. Enjoy-

ment of her friendships is important to her sense of well being and belonging.

J: Yeahs..because you got these nice chairs?

F: Yeahs.

J: And you keep them clean and nice.. that is why I thought that someone else must live with you because it is so neat..

F: Well, since de fire time, is I alone.

J: Did you build your house up there or..

F: No, dat was a little house I rent.

J: You rented it?

F: Yeahs, an' I use' to pay 4 / 5 dollars a mont'. Yeahs, dat was before I go to de centre after de fire caught me.

J: Did you live in exactly the same place the whole time you were in John John?

Comment: Most of the people who were burnt out by the fire were renting their accommodation in John John. The rents were very low and thus older and low income people were able to find a place. Many of the people were long term residents and were felt to 'belong' to John John.

F: Well de same place...well 26 years I live dere before de fire burn me out. When I come down from where de fire victims were livin' because de centre, dat is de.. what called de community business de village people dey need dat to have events. So we lived dere at de centre for 3 years.

J: Did you have to put lots of pressure on the government to get you out.

F: Well not so much. As soon as when dey get a house because you see house was scarce. An' after dey come an' dey get dis house den dey sent me .. I came here to live 19..81, in May. All of us, me an' Luzana.

J: I know Mistress Lee didn' get one, she ended up having to live with her son.

F: Yeahs, yuh see what happen she say didn' feel like stayin' dere so she use' to stay by she son.

J: So because she stayed by her son she didn't get a place?

F: She didn' get a place but if she didn' stay with where she was she'd a get one.

J: So she made a mistake because since then she has had to move and move and move.

F: Well yeahs.

Comment: When the fire went through John John some of the victims were able to move in with their relatives. However, those who did not have any family willing to take them in were able to stay in the community centre until the housing authority found places that these pensioners could afford. In the case where a woman had her own house, the fire forced her to rely on her children. This was very difficult for her after being independent, able to help with her grandchildren and go out to work. She has lived for varying periods of time with several children and feels that there is little hope of her gaining her own place again. Each time the mother had feuded with her family, it has been on some point of honour regarding respect for the mother or grandmother or over problems with her 'cross' of a son who is constantly in trouble with the law... and he is still 'miserable'.

J: I see that you have extra things on your door to keep safe?

F: Yeahs, I put dose. I ain' able wid dose...

J: And you put the burglar proofing in?

F: Yeahs, but dat wouldn' be not'ing for dey to cut.

J: No but at least they are going to have to cut it.

F: Yeahs but, well nobody ever interfere with me, but I only jus' tryin' to protec' myself.

J: You are certainly not inviting?

F: (laughs)

Comment: Miss Fielders was the only pensioner who had introduced extra locks and burglar proofing to her quarters. Other pensioners had talked about their fears and how they would not open a door or window to anybody in the night, but Miss Fielders was particularly cautious, especially since her neighbour was raped and strangled only two doors down. Miss Fielders is convinced that the rastas were responsible and these same people gather outside every night.

J: And so you have got electricity in here?

F: Ummhmm. I put dat, not de light yuh know de electricity business.. so I put dat bulb so it would show all over (fluorescent light) so I could see.

J: And you just need the one and that does for the whole house. That would be plenty bright, huh?

F: Yeahs, plenty bright, plenty bright.

Comment: With a fluorescent light, Miss Fielders had the best lit quarters I had visited. Most of the quarters were lit by one very low powered bulb and the brown of the walls offered no assistance whatever. Miss Fielders had creme and white interior colouring and her curtains were neat floral drapes.

J: Do you have much trouble with your power going off and your water..Do you have trouble with WASA?

F: Well sometimes when dey switch dem an' yuh have days..yuh understan' when yuh have a blackout an' yuh get it switch off, but dey does tell us on de radio. But we don' have trouble wid dem. Providin' de government doin' it on deir own.

Comment: Miss Fielders does not expect to have uninterrupted utility services. She is happy to have these things at all and with a light and a fridge, she does not have a heavy demand on these services (although she would be considered one of the most affluent pensioners in the Beetham quarters). Miss Fielders also has a radio which is prized among pensioners because each day they can tune into the 'deaths' (funeral announcements) and find out about interruptions to services (water, electricity). The radio offers company, information and a link with the world outside. And those who hear the news tell the news or have conversational points to elaborate on. Friends greet each other with 'What happenin' or 'Yuh hear nuh how so, so, so..'

J: Are you a PNM supporter?

F: PNM..Well I would be for dem.

J: That is since 1962?

F: It would be about dat.

J: Have you seen lots of changes since Independence?

F: Well yeah so far dey tryin' to make de place nice so we could walk an' t'ing. I never see any trouble with dem.

J: Because when you were young you said that you couldn't go to school because it was too expensive?

F: Well PNM wasn' in power den...dat is when I was a little girl. But PNM come in when I was big an' I responsible for m'self.

J: So it was too late?

F: We never had any trouble with dem.

Comment: The women I spoke to were not indifferent to the political process as they were usually PNM sympathizers. However, whereas all the men I spoke with launched into discussions around the theme of politics, the women were not so bold or enthusiastic. Miss Fielders acknowledges that she does not have any trouble with the PNM which is hardly an endorsement of the party's policies. I wondered whether most women even thought that politics and politicians were relevant to them or could make any impact on their lives.

J: ummhmm.

F: Dey haven' a little party dey invitin' us to go to. If servol have anyt'ing we go dere to eat an' drink an' have party an' all dat.

J: You don't get a little money from Servol every month?

F: I never get dat.

J: Because I know some people get it.

F: I never get..since I come here I never get.

J: How do you qualify for that?

F: Well I don' know. Perhaps dey know people but I never get it.

I never get, but I din' even know dat dey does get dat.

J: No! It is a little, not much but it is something.

F: Well perhaps yuh know how we in de back... Yuh know de house is right in de back so perhaps nobody come here, but anyhow I have to go an' fix a little fella..Yuh know de girl who called?

J: And what, is he vomiting or something?

F: Yeahs.

J: So you are going to pray?

Comment: Miss Fielders is a healer in this community. She has been waiting to attend to somebody outside. But now, she does not ask me to leave. She seems to be concerned that I should stay and see her doing some of her work. When I listened to her talking about energy points at different anatomical locations, I thought it rather similar to the language employed by accupuncturists. However, accupuncturists are not connecting energy points with spirit possession.

F: I will fix it wid a candle an' a glass an' pull it up fast.

J: And pull it up fast... How long have you done that?

F: Yuh mean how long I been doin' dat? Long time! Since

(Turn the tape... I tell her about Mistress John)

J: I asked her about how she learnt that. And she said, 'Oh, her mother taught her.' So your mother taught you?

F: For treatment, we outsiders uh, we understan'.

(Someone calls from outside)

Yeahs, come. Well let me explain yuh..tomorrow I won' be home..

Man: Tomorrow mornin'

F: Very early, anyhow I will leave it dere.

Man: Yes, well it is all kind a t'ing but it's allright. Whether yuh here or not tomorrow is allright, yuh jus' have to forget dat.

I t'ought de iceman come?

F: Well I ain' see him... I don' know if he come to de front ?

Man: Well Fielders wha hap'n if yuh have one light, yuh have a bill to put on where yuh are goin' to pay... So yuh see how dey workin' you?

F: Well if I'd known dat I wouldn' have gone but dem allright yeahs.

J: So you are going to have to pay whether you use it or not?

F: Yeahs. Whether it de bill or whatever it is.

J: And that is on top of the rent... This is T&TEC?

Comment: The man who called about ice was making a conversation about the electricity bill that Miss Fielders received. He thought that once someone had a light, then the government would just keep putting the price up and there is no way of controlling what would come onto the bill. He was afraid of things like this as you could get used to having the convenience and then be having to find the money to pay. The conspiracy of those out to take whatever you might have is a popular vehicle of analysis.

F: Yeahs. Man, yuh see everybody does do different. Well yuh see de bushette here right here where he cleanin' de pavement. Dey call dat a bushette. I lit dere an' I put a small glass an' it bring it up. Now yuh have a peak here in de stomach.. yuh know a little peak an' yuh have one behin' here dey call it de poopier bone .. poopier peak. When dat fall down ' is hell yuh know.

J: Right.

F: Yeah (laughs) It take a doctor have to see about dat but when yuh can get to somebody yuh know who could help yuh out. So dis here yuh put it dere an' pull it out.

J: So this would be on the knee?

F: Right. Yuh see, dis little plate well dis would go dere. Now de heat of it de glass here.. it have light, and dis would out.

J: So that is from falling down that he got that? He doesn' have to take medicine?

F: Yeah, he take a litt.. No, no, he don' take no medicine, not after I done with him.

Comment: Miss Fielders has some status in her community for being able to perform these rituals of 'pulling' out the source of pain through energy points or bushettes using a candle placed on a glass. She emphasized that those who knew the art of healing were from other islands and that these skills were passed from parent to child. In her case, Miss Fielders learnt this from her mother as she grew up. However, the healer is not so much an apprentice as one 'called' and given wisdom.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

URBAN WOMEN OF EAST PORT-OF-SPAIN
COPING STYLES AND IDENTITY

BY

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CHAPTER 6

THEMES EMERGING FROM THE VOICES OF WOMEN

> It was the illiterate and semi-literate Negroes who kept the ancestral fires burning; who remained active in the Shouters during the difficult years of proscription: who continued to worship the dark gods of the Shango in the face of middle-class indifference and contempt; who filled the Calypso tents with song and music in the early days before this Aristophanic art form became a tourist attraction, favoured by British and American alike, and so won at long last the approbation of the middle class educated Negro; who invented the steel band and fought and died to keep it alive so that it would become eventually a status symbol proudly adorning the drawing-rooms of the same middle-class, who during its embryonic period joined forces with British officialdom in the effort to stamp it out as another culturally retrogressive influence.
>
> Albert Gomes[1]

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1. Albert Gomes Through a Maze of Color 1974, p.82

Symbolic Representation of Local Reality

> "The differentiae of the (Caribbean) superstructure are readily identifiable. All of the colonizers brought with them the general values of Europe shaped by Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation. But each motherland gave its particular impress to the general pattern: Catholic or Protestant, monarchical or republican. Linguistic colonialism, again, was a general feature, for all of the colonizer-planter groups conducted a process whereby the slave, forced to yield up his own language forms, was compelled to learn some vulgar variant of the master language in order to survive: it would have been unheard of for a planter to learn, say, Ibo or Ashanti, while for the middle 'free coloured' groups it became a symbol of respectability to speak the metropolitan language perfectly. Language thus became a value-symbol, a cultural mechanism to reinforce the general ideology of white superiority and black inferiority. It thus shaped, permanently, the linguistic map of the Caribbean. But again, each separate European power gave particular expression to the general practice. So, in the English Caribbean, it was the juxtaposition of 'good' English and 'bad' English; in the French islands, the rivalry between Parisian French and local patois..."[2]

Sylvia Wynter suggested a disjunction or 'decapitation' when a 'learned tradition' or 'high tradition' of one civilization invades a 'little tradition'. Where one tradition is literary and the other oral, the disjunction is more pronounced and in the colonizing symbol system of legitimation the 'oral' tradition is marked as inferior. The colonizer, after all, has power to define reality and assign status, hence ethnocentrism defined the traditions of slaves as an absence of culture and a preponderance of ignorance. Failure to perform with proficiency in the mainstream in post-emancipation society then became a symptom of 'cultural deprivation' rather than continued ethnocentric bias.[3]

---

[2] Gordon Lewis **Main Currents of Caribbean Thought** 1983 p.161

Anthropologists and psychoanalytic psychologists would consider it anathema to conceive of a human group without culture or divested of culture by force as human conduct is mediated by symbolic representations of reality. In other words, the individual is inextricably linked with symbols for any understanding of social conduct and indeed, any expression of self within society. Equations of surplus and deficit models of cultural continuities, retentions and survivals is simplistic and void of any appreciation of the role of the symbolic realm in human intellection whilst overemphasizing the hegemonic intentions inherent in overlordship and the construction of serfdom. The devaluation of African cultural forms and connotations of somatic and cultural inferiority may be better understood from within the dialectics of cultural engineering for dominion and exploitation, than from any cosmological construction of 'nature' or faith in the objective datum of 'science'.

The confrontation between Melville Herskovits and Franklin Frazier after Myth of the Negro Past (1941) was published, pointed to the limits of models that focused on cultural forms and comparisons between modern African tribes and Afro-American / Caribbean survivals or retentions. Black scholars of the 1970's pointed beyond M.G. Smith's call for isolating patterns that persist in contemporary African tribes and Afro-Caribbean settings. According to Richard Price (1970) there is no greater potential in investigating historically linked communalities in ideas as opposed to reconstructing direct correlates of African forms. To those who ascribe to the Herskovits thesis, form is a cognate veneer on a more complex cultural reality. The psycho-emotional experience and rituals routinized in everyday conduct of slaves were more likely to persist in African styles of community interaction than the institutions that required material resources to maintain. Folklorists, musicologists and anthropologists have found expressive and performance arts congruent among descendants of slaves. And for many scholars this persistence is linked with the broader question of cultural retention as a form of resistance to the natal alienation in the processes of master-slave interaction rituals.[4]

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[3] See Sylvia Wynter in Maureen Lewis 'The Impact on Language and Literature in the English-Speaking Caribbean.' 1979 p.101.

Language is the symbolizing instrument of for socio-cultural relationships and the assigning of identity. Orlando Patterson contended that Max Weber's analysis of authority needs to be underlined by the notion of legitimation or control of the symbolized domain of human experience in the production of powerlessness where no social definition exists outside the master. In Egypt the word for slave or captive literally meant 'living dead'

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[4] See Roger Abrahams and John Szwed 'After the Myth: Studying Afro-American Cultural Patterns in the Plantation Literature.' pp. 40-54 in Man of Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture. 1983.

(zombification). The slave natally alienated, an infidel outside the dialectic of membership. The Hegelian dialectic of slavery is essentially a relationship of parasitic dependency. The *being for itself* is dependent on the *being for another* where the former is master and the is slave.

This construction of the slave included the ritual of induction through identity stripping and renaming. This was a profound gesture as social existence is defined and contextualized in notions of the real and the significant. Ernst Cassirer put forward the idea that the connection between the thing and the identity of the thing were inseparable.

> The notion that name and essence bear a necessary and internal relation to each other...the name does not merely denote but actually is the essence of its object.. that the potency of the real thing is contained in the name - that is one of the fundamental assumptions of the myth-making consciousness itself.[5]

On Worthy Park in Jamaica, Michael Craton's research uncovered that "slave names were distressingly similar to those of the estate's cattle, so that it is almost possible to confuse one list with another in...ledgers." Children were rarely given surnames until after their tenth year. The names of slaves were burnt into their flesh like the tribal marks of the condemned. The shorn head of symbolic castration for males and the removal of the feminine crown for females was reminiscent of mourning rituals in many cultures.[6] Orlando Patterson emphasized that while the construction of the slave as symbolic zombie was fundamental the slave never accepted the definition:

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[5] Ernst Cassirer Language and Myth New York: Dover 1953 p.3.

[6] Michael Craton Searching for the Invisible Man 1978 p.157 and the

> There is absolutely no evidence from the long and dismal annals of slavery to suggest that any group of slaves ever internalized the conception of degradation held by their masters. To be dishonoured - and to sense, however acutely, such dishonour - is not to lose the quintessential human urge to participate and to want a place.[7]

Maureen Warren Lewis located speakers of Yoruba, Kikongo, Hausa, Fon and Arabic in Trinidad between 1968 and 1972 almost a century and a half after Emancipation and the intensive introduction of liberated Africans between 1840 and 1860. (Refer to Chapter 1). Her observations indicated that a symbiotic relationship existed between the European languages, African languages and the *lingua franca* of Anglicized Trinidad. Yoruba retained a particularly important psychological influence in the Afro-Trinidadian cultural community. However, as Gordon Lewis indicated above, linguistic expression reflected identification with different class and ethnic groupings as well as the necessity of participating in mainstream society (that was English, French and Spanish until the institutions of education, law and government became monolingual).

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ideas of 'liminal incorporation'..ie the production of social death in legal disenfranchisement in formalizing marginality in Orlando Patterson *Ibid* p.45.
Note: It was on the issue of shaving the heads of debtors in post-emancipation Trinidad that caused a riot - one of the few violent incidents in the transition period.

7. Orlando Patterson *Ibid* 1983 p.97

The study of language in East Port of Spain is primarily a study of *les paroles* or speech acts as the tradition is essentially oral. The study of abstract symbols systems of signs and rules of syntax or *Langue* is a task for the linguist as de Saussure's distinction requires familiarity with the procrustean bed of linguistic possibilities as well as the creative aspect of human discoursing.[8] And even though distinctions are made between linguistic variants from the 'Standard'... "the gift of speech and a well-ordered language are characteristic of every known group of human beings".[9] In every known society of human beings the construction of reality is a verbal one and thus, it would seem that language is the essential means of communication among members.

> "What we want is our own language. I intend to write in our own language. You know this patois we have. Not English, not French, but somthing we have made up. this is our own. You were right. Damn those lords and ladies. Damn Jane Austen. This is ours, this is what we have to work with. And Henry, I am sure, whatever his reasons, is with me in this."
> "Yes," Henry said. "We must defend our culture."
> [10]

Enclaves of African communities in East Port of Spain fostered retentions from their cultural heritage by maintaining mutual aid societies to derive economic and death benefits.[11]

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[8] F. de Saussure Course in General Linguistics (1916) 1959.

[9] Eward Sapir in Susanne Langer Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art. 1957 p.126

[10] V.S. Naipaul on Language: A Flag on the Island 1967 p.182

[11] The sousou round and burial societies are considered part of life among the women engaged in this research.

Thus, a dual identity was also linguistically marked. The dominant language of the community is reflected in the Creolization of the spoken languages in the streets of the city; the basolect, mesolect and acrolect continuum of approximations to Standard English. The oral expression of East Port of Spain residents are almost exclusively conducted in basolect and mesolect.[12] Confining her research to comparisons between Yoruba and basolect, Maureen Lewis traced idiomatic expressions and concepts, as well as linguistic correspondences of pace, rhythm, phrase length and mood sequencing of speech acts and found striking similarities between the two.

The language of speech, song and dance took on the qualities of art, self affirmation and stylized expression. The contours of rhythm and presentation evolved not only for their entertainment value but as an art form to service and succour the spirit of emancipation in mundane settings where even the wretched of the earth can constitute a meaningful reality that centers on individuals making symbols work for themselves. Symbols have that magic of resonating through human hearts, minds and bodies to cohere in unison sublime. To dance and sing was to connect the alienated slave to an ancestral dynasty whose names were lost or never spoken. In the Caribbean where emphasis on the oral traditions have been marked and actually fostered by politically motivated efforts to retard an unlettered populace, the classic instruments of provocation, humour, satire and ribaldry have evolved into Afro-performance arts.[13]

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[12] The names of these linguistic variants indicates that the standard is an English rarely spoken in Trinidad and the base of the social pyramid also speaks in 'basolect'.

In the world of the slave there were limited avenues for self expression or self defence and thus 'power' was linked to the perspicacious and artful use of the symbol systems at play in the dialogue with European plantocrat colonizers. Language, the symbol system *par excellence* had to be 'mastered' for accessing power among disenfranchised slaves. That language was a strategic instrument in the context of the times is emboldened by the limited range of symbols available for manipulation. The slave had little access to legal recourse, tradition had been thrust aside by a brutal uprooting and policy of deliberate cultural annihilation, leaving charisma as a grim line in a desperate bid for dominion over any sense of 'self'.[14] Physical powerplay or violence was literally in the hands of the planter class and beyond the bounds of the intelligent slave. The slave who willed to survive created a *modus vivendi* that was commodious given the cramped quarters circumscribed by casting the slave as embodied brawn for the 'superior' cerebration of planters and managers. And while not every slave was a Black Hamlet or Lady Macbeth it would seem that mastering the tongue could make for ambiguity in the avenues of actual control to rival assumed control. Speech acts are keys to symbolic intersubjective processes available for interpretation at the intramental intellectual and intermental social levels for plantocrat and slave.

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[13] See Eric Williams. **Negro Education in the West Indies** where he illustrates how members of the planter class felt that the only education that should be expended on Negro children was a hoe in their hands...they would have no other use for education.

[14] Max Weber: authority has 3 sources: law, charisma and tradition. **Basic Concepts in Sociology** trans. H.P. Secher. Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1972, pp.81-83.

Edward Kamau Brathwaite stated that language imprisoned the slave in the plantocrat symbol system but it was in the (mis)use of language that the slave most effectively rebelled.[15] And in situations so delicate and dangerous as white women's kitchens and overseers' offices the astute perceptions and psychological knowledge of plantocrat character allowed for deception, duplicity, and strategic misunderstandings to be disguised by the mask of slave's childlike cheerfulness, stupidity and loquacity.[16] Mrs. Lanigan, a plantocrat journalist writing in the nineteenth century remarked:

> The negroes are indefatigable talkers, at all times and in all seasons. Whether in joy or in grief, they ever find full employment for the little member, the tongue.[17]

Charles William Day's (1852) **Five Years' Residence in the British West Indies** remarked that slaves had no civilized sense of discretion. It would seem that the 'sweet colloquy' of the slave has agitated Day enough to 'put it to' print and posterity. The slave, like the 'child' so often hauled in to serve comparisons, is astute enough to pout aloud when one injustice might be compounded by indifferent. The 'childlike simplicity' or the slave's 'low cunning' have the strategic value of creating an abrasive interference in the conscience of power[18]:

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[15] See Edward Kamau Brathwaite **The Folk Culture in Jamaica** 1981 pp.31-33.

[16] Many travellers in the West Indies comment on the linguistic qualities of slaves and the fact they were ever testing the limites of tolerance to wear down managers and overseers. See Anthony de Verteuil's **Sir Louis de Verteuil: His Life and Times 1800-1900** 1981 and Gordon Lewis **Main Currents of Caribbean Thought** 1983.

[17] Mrs. Lanigan (1844) quoted in Roger Abrahams. **The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the emergence of Creole Culture.** 1983, p.28.

> The Negro is very fond of talking to himself...or at least of publishing in the streets his private opinions on his own private affairs for the benefit of the public at large, and he goes stumbling along in sweet colloquy with himself, seeming every now and then to "put it to you" whether he has been fairly dealt with. The women are particularly prone to this. They appear to have no idea of keeping their thoughts to themselves, and in fact their character is the strangest melange of childish simplicity and low cunning it is possible to imagine...[19]

Another annoyance to plantocrats was the constant need to adjust disputes and frictions between slaves. Mrs. Carmichael of Laurel Hill Estate (1834) despaired that she was interrupted even on the sabbath to settle disputes among slaves. The noise disturbed any retreat to rest and continually frustrated any hope of concentration on any other project or activity. Attention to the slaves was constant, they became the focus of planter attention dialoguing through tension and irritating disputes. The slaves constantly took the focus in a way that potentially challenged the assumptions of racial inferiority or superiority, depending on the stance that was taken by those in control or having ownership.

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[18] The slave like the child pitting one parent against the other, could attract the attention of plantocrats in their proximity to the character of other members of that class by publishing 'private' thoughts about specific events within the hearing of those who could police their own or make a difference within their ranks. Much of the writing available about these incidents were actually recorded in the diaries of travellers and spread abroad. Our records of slave life have come principally from itinerants in the Caribbean. A sociology through letters and journals.

[19] Quoted in Roger Abrahams Man-of Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture. 1983 p.29

> Surely no fiends can be more clamorous than Negroes. The whole place resounds with cries - no time is sacred to quiet - even Sunday is desecrated by the yells and bawling, whistling and singing, and he cannot understand the advantages of quiet. Shrieks of laughter also, or of rage, as the case may be, are all very well now and then, but when ringing in one's ears sans cesse...they absolutely become "wearing". ...Their language is horrible in the extreme.[20]

Roger Abrahams' Man-of-Words in the West Indies (1983) described the emergence of linguistic performance arts in Creole culture as an essentially African style that endured within the adversity of slavery. Among these performance arts, particularly among young men, was the show of good argument with rapid fire of invective in street combat. The slave developed 'bad talk' and displays of 'ignorance' or 'nonsense' to a new level of provocation. The importance of playing the provocateur is to create noise which is a frontal attack on the household and a way of making *commess*. Hurling abuse and cussing down an opponent is a particular style of street combat. Making bacchanal is particularly common in the settling of disputes such as transgressions of moral codes. Phoebe is adamant about the strategy of ig-

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20. Quoted in Roger Abrahams. *Ibid* 1983, p.29.

norance. "Yeahs, I does be tough. Yuh have to be good for yuhself. Yuh have to pelt a bad word here an' dere because if yuh can' do dat dey t'ink yuh stupid." Thus, the art of provocation is part of standing up for oneself and not letting anyone take advantage or get the upper hand in an encounter. Young women standing up to fathers of their children or warding off other women from entering liaisons with their bread winning 'friends' engage in this style of linguistic combat. Mena (31 years) explained that before she was 'saved' she could 'get on real quarrelsome' but now she has changed.

The West indian novel reveals a continued emphasis on the tongue among women as they conduct their lives and rule their way wherever possible.

> ... Some of Laura's shouts and curses were the richest things I have ever heard, and I shall never forget them.
>
> Hat said once, 'Man, she like Shakespeare when it come to using words.'
>
> Laura used to shout, 'Alwyn, you broad-mouth brute, come here.'
>
> And 'Gavin, if you don't come here this minute, I make you fart fire, you hear.'
>
> And, 'Lorna, you black bow-leg bitch, why you can't look what you doing'.
>
> ....I asked my mother, 'How Laura does live?'
>
> My mother slapped me, saying, 'You know, you too fast for a little boy.'[21]

The Creole performance art of eloquent speech making on the one hand and the pithy maxims and rapid fire of invective are mistaken for attempts to imitate European forms rather than adaptations for patterns of performance that are characteristic of African modes. The contextualization of appropriate linguistic arts and patterns of relation reveals another white mask on characteristic African performances styles that served a particular role during slavery.[22]

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[21] V.S. Naipaul. Miguel Street (1959) England: Penguin 1984, pp.85-86.

Among the women I talked to there were constant referents and linguistic patterns that marked our cultural separateness. Superficially, one could point to the linguistic sequences that revealed a difference in grammar or vocabulary but on a more fundamental level the separateness emerged from different perspectives culturally and economically. These broader aspects of everyday styles of communication were striking, particularly the frequent recourse to humour and insertions of theocentric phrases in conversational sequences. There was a certain exuberance and ebullience the lifted difficult and often painful experiences out of any dense suggestion of melancholy or remorse. This humour allowed women to 'move ahead' and not 'fall down' or 'take on' the woes . The effort involved in sustaining an emotional detatchment from ever occuring crises is reflected in the frequent insertions of the verb 'to make'. The use of this verb promotes the idea that these women are responsible for the effort that it takes to struggle against the odds. I make m'self happy, I make m'self

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22. Once again the metaphor of deep and surface structures has emerged as a guiding figure for transcultural symbolic interaction where the gestures are interpreted by Europeans as inexact imitations of Europe rather than an African modes in European disguise. Of course they are both of these things but it depends on the perspective taken by the interpreter, seemingly always outside the colony so transformed by its own variants on this cultural turf.

harden, I make bacchanal, Yuh have to make it work. Similarly, women do not talk passively of becoming pregnant, they 'make' babies 'for' their men.

When I spoke with women East of the Dry River, I was constantly reminded of the distinction that Basil Bernstein made between restricted and elaborated linguistic codes. For many of the women the world was primarily comprised a few acres on the East side of Port of Spain, and links to relatives in New York and Toronto. The centrality of the struggle to survive meant that the language was particularistic from the point of view of someone making links into their lives in the initial contacts but I found this little different from sitting with Caribbeanists from the United States whose focus was around the cut and thrust of university life in an extremely competitive environment. For example, if I asked women where they were born, they would not say that they were born in Port of Spain or in Trinidad or where-ever, they would simply say, 'de general' or 'at home' and would go on to say how 'most people born in de general'. This is what Clifford Geertz would term 'local knowledge' and for the ethnographer, it is essential to become familiar with this domain. The Glossary towards the end of this thesis is one indication of the labelling of reality that has to become immediately to hand if intentions are to be heard as opposed to the words and sounds of 'another' socio-cultural reality.

Another linguistic pattern that was novel to me on arriving in Trinidad, was the frequent references to the graces of God, old testament metaphors and a fatalistic image of life as a journey or pilgrimage. Jessica (39 yrs) would lament that, "yuh have to be careful, but it makes no sense to worry...yuh have to look out for yuhself for yuh don' know what 'ahead." Denise (34 yrs) asserts, "This is life too! Yuh got to fight for life eh. Yuh got t' fight yuh fate real hard." Thus, Denise looks on life as determined by fate. However, she insists that being thrown into this plan is something that must be fought fervently. So on the one hand, there is the idea of fate and on the other, there is the idea of the responsible, enterprising and principled individual resisting the forces of fate..."Yeah, yuh have t' hustle...Yuh have t' make life. Life is hard an' yuh jus' can' sit down an' some people does seems to want t' sit slow an' get everyt'ing. An' it's not so..yuh never get. Yuh have t' get up an' hustle. ...I livin' an' dat is all I want to do yuh know. I livin' jus' like everybody else. I look for somet'ing, a home an' t'ing. How I am happy...an t'ank God for dat. Dere are struggles in between still but yuh still have to go along because dat is life...yuh will get little stumblin' blocks here an' dere but yuh jus' keep goin' along, eh? Yuh can' make it because yuh get stumblin' block yuh say 'Allright, everyt'ing fall down an' yuh can' go no more'... Is to go on.... If yuh can' go no more, yuh res', step aside an' yuh go again til yuh get where yuh want." Yvonne (41 yrs) would caution.."Don' mind t'ings hard, I have no regrets: evert'ing takes time...Woman does fall but rise back up." And throughout conversations and especially on leaves-taking God is referenced in routine phrases like, "Please God if I live...", "God willing...", "Lord have mercy!..", "Praise God..", "Thank God..." Younger people would say that these sequences were "an ol' people t'ing" but I noted that younger women often made references to God as an appeal for mercy over some loss of temper or period of vexation. "Lord help meh...", "Lord have mercy..."... These phrases came in when women felt some remorse for their fiery outbursts of 'ignorance' and 'vexation' during confrontations where words are pelted with venom.

It is difficult to write 'about' symbolic respresentation of local reality without making entry into the lives of the speakers and their aesthetic use of language, as the words do not stand alone but are vehicles for communication between individuals. As the psychoanalyst, Franz Fanon suggested in **Black Skin, White Masks**, when we speak we suspend something of our existence for another. Thus, one does not merely speak, but intends to convey something or communicate with someone using language as a mediator for self expression. For example, Compton and several women would convey their intended meanings by using neologisms. Compton would describe a woman as 'pinny', which connoted meanings of being thin like a pin, being like Penny (Trinidad's Miss Universe), being tinny or hollow... And for Compton the ideal woman is 'big an' nice'..Someone who have on a little size. Vena would insist that she liked to keep her mind "actified" while Jessica's motto for life is that.. "yuh jus' have t' adaptate". Language then, is something that is shaped by the will of the speaker in the creative process of routine conversation.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the conversational style was the women's ability to laugh, a raucous, knee slapping gesturing that pitched the content of conversation into a public arena for public scrutiny as opposed to a depressing private reality of hardship. Women would retell stories with attention to points of relief. The thin line between laughter and pathos is captured by Naipaul's Laura in Miguel Street:

> Laura used to say, "It have nothing like education in the world. I don't want my children to grow like me." ...The eldest daughter Lorna, came home from her typing lessons late one night and said, "Ma, I going to make a baby."
>
> I heard the shriek that Laura gave.
>
> And for the first time I heard Laura crying. It wasn't ordinary crying. She seemed to be crying all the cry she had saved up since she was born; all the cry she had tried to cover up with her laughter....
>
> All the street heard Laura crying.
>
> Next day Boyee said, "I don't see why she so mad about that. She does do the same."
>
> ...I didn't know who I felt sorrier for - Laura or her daughter. I felt that Laura was ashamed now to show herself in the street...She was an old woman now.
>
> She no longer shouted at her children, no longer beat them. ..she had I lost interest in them. ...
>
> Hat said, "Life is helluva thing. You can see trouble coming and you can't do a damn thing to prevent it coming. You just got to sit and watch and wait."
>
> According to the papers, it was just another weekend tragedy, one of many. Lorna was drowned at Carenage....And when the police came to tell Laura about it, she had said very little.
>
> Laura said, "It good. It good. It better that way."[23]

In the language of the women here, life is hard but 'Yuh musn' take it on'. There is a tolerance for eccentricities or people behaving 'stupidy-like' as it is understood that the pressures are endless and that a person will 'fall down' if she 'takes it on'.

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[23] V.S. Naipaul Miguel Street. 1959 pp.90-91.

Male / Female Relationships - Carnal Knowing and Identity.

> Coitus can scarcely take place in a vacuum, although of itself it appears a biological and physical activity, it is set so deeply within the larger context of human affairs that it serves as a charged microcosm of the variety of attitudes and values to which culture subscribes. Among other things, it may serve as a model of sexual politics on an individual or personal plane.[24]

Albert Gomes (1974) described the local attitude to sex as "exuberant and gluttonous".[25] In the literature of the yard sex is as uninhibited and graphic as the violence in lives barraged by uncertainties and all manner of unseemliness. Sex is not something imprisoned in the mind, a guilt incubus to disturb the conscience of those who would equate purity and chastity with honour and civilized virtue.[26] Sexuality is fundamental to existence and must be expressed for survival. It is the "thereness" of sex that first struck my attention in 1973 when I arrived just days before Carnival. "Indeed, its underlying philosophy is epitomized in T.S. Eliot's well known lines about birth, copulation and death being all the facts when we get down to brass tacks."[27] And among those in tune with the world of local bards, the calypsonians,[28] a passionate realism embraces flesh in a brutish style that has no seminal spring in sentimentality or the romantic love tradition.[29] The sanctity of the middle class bedroom and the immaculate deception of their daughters is as elusive as every other luxury in the septic depravity of wretched poverty.[30]

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[24] Kate Millett. **Sexual Politics** 1969, p.31.

[25] Albert Gomes. **Through a Maze of Color** 1974, p.75.

[26] Kate Millett *Ibid*. described the Victorian image of the pedestalled women "a concoction of nostalgic mirage, regressed sexuality, religious ambition, and simplistic social panacea." (p.137) In essence, this concoction is at home in the concepts of fundamentalist morality and "respectability" among lower class church women. This term is popular in Victorian literature. It has innuendoes of middle class style and feminine propriety or upright conduct. It has all the trappings of prestige courting power of Erving Goffman's **Asylum** Prestige placates, nurtures, seduces, adorns, reifies...etc embodied by the oppressed servicing power.

In an atmosphere where a pervasive ideology of dominant interests would see skin and squalor condemned to blackness an inscrutable biology has shown remarkable tolerance in illicit sex. A history of confounding hypocrisy is written in the spectrum of pigment; the layers of miscegenation. The women barrack dwellers and house slaves were colonized by a system nowhere more lucidly defined as *patriarchal*.[31] A double standard insured that white mothers have porcelain progeny or fear for their lives. Indeed, the thought that white women could countenance liaisons with slaves or the sons of slaves was reprehensible in the extreme.[32] In such cases, emancipation would have to be more than a state of mind. In the plantation economy, economic viability of women and slaves was dependent on the dictates of a benevolent planter.[33]

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[27] Albert Gomes. *Ibid*, p.172.

[28] V.S. Naipaul. **The Middle Passage** 1962. "It is only in the calypso that the Trinidadian touches reality. The calypso is a purely local form. No song composed outside Trinidad is a calypso. The calypso deals with local incidents, local attitudes, and it does so in a local language. The pure calypso, the best calypso, is incomprehensible to the outsider. Wit and verbal conceits are fundamental; without them no song, however good the music, however well sung, can be judged a calypso." pp.75-76.

[29] V.S. Naipaul. **Miguel Street**..my mother said. "I think you taking this love business a little too far, you hear.... You know, I really wish you was like me. If somebody did marry you off when you was fifteen, we wouldn't a been hearing all this nonsense, you hear. Making all this damn fuss about your heart and love and all that rubbish." pp.111-112.

[30] See chapter 5: Beetham Housing Estate statistics: 90% houses have 2 bedrooms or less, while 38% of households have 5 or more residents. Central Statistical Office 1980. Unemployment and underemployment are chronic with over 50% unemployed. Juvenile delinquency and criminal activity goes hand in glove with unemployment statistics. And the birth

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rate defies the national trend by remaining high.

[31] La Borde would write of Trinidad's French planters: "Morally the men were good; though enticed by the seductions of easy love-making which slavery brought, most it is true had a mistress; but promiscuity, that is to say the morbid need for variety in love, the constant seeking for novelty, was rare. The women were pure; fidelity to the conjugal bond was kept by them at all costs. Histoire de l'Ile de la Trinidad sous le Gouvernement Espagnol. 1876 p.266

[32] "it is a common misconception amongst the middle classes of the West Indies, both white and coloured, that the sexual indulgences of the masses are due to biological differences in the organs of sex, and that, as the sexual desires of Negro men are so potent, upper-class women must take precautions to protect themselves against rape. The fact is that an occurrence of this kind is so rare that it is practically unheard of. This unfortunate myth is no doubt due to the fact that the freer sex life of the masses, coupled with the prestige that the bringing of a child into the world 'for' a white man has involved, has made Negro women peculiarly open to exploitation by the middle and upper classes. It is a frequent phenomenon in the Southern States to find that a white woman may have a strongly repressed desire for intercourse with a Negro man, whose supposed sexual powers may have become an obsession to her. Rejection on the part of the Negro has often led to denunciations from the woman, and the horrible tragedy of lynching. John Dollard et al. Frustration and Aggression 1939 and Helene Deutsch. The Psychology of Women 1944. Noted in T.S. Simey *Ibid* 1946 p.101. Gerda Lerna (Ed) Black Women in white America: A Documentary History. 1972. Angela Davis. Women, Race and Class 1981.

[33] John Stuart Mill The Subjection of Women 1869. "We have had the morality of submission and the morality of chivalry and generosity; the time is now come for the most fundamental of social relations to be

The sexual dimension of female slavery was marked by concubinage to masters and overseers, and the emasculation of Black men.[34] The male plantocrat was described as leading a lifestyle that knew only excess; gargantuan consumption of food, alcohol and sex.[35] The pigmentocracy that was born of concubinage provided antecedents for a coloured bourgeoisie. In some cases, the mothers of mulatto children were freed but there was no guarantee.[36] The slave concubine had to bear the often cruel proximity to jealous white women along with the rejection of fellow slaves who detested the possibility of betrayal and resented the privileged status that women could command through sexual affiliation. The liaisons between slave masters and slave women and their children, made for ambiguity as such interpenetration was fraught with possibilities for personal political advancement and created vulnerability in the contours of human relations.

The slave woman had little control over matters of will but

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placed under the rule of equal justice."

[34] Slave management practices: hierarchy of slaves where men were usually given promotion; male slaves as stud rather than husbands and fathers; women were mothers; all were workers. The sons and daughters of slaves were few as very few survived due to the number of still births, high rate of death before 9 days (child was not named until after 9 days). The poisoning of slave babies was one way to avoid condemning them to slavery.

[35] The testimony of every observer -Piere Labat, Lady Nugent, Bryan Edwards, Pere du Tertre, Humboldt, "Monk" Lewis, Schomburgk, and many others - agreed in painting a portrait of the planter life-style full fo drinking, dancing, insipid conversation, gargantuan eating, and sexual excess. Gordon Lewis. Main Currents of Caribbean Thought 1983, pp.7-8.

[36] Bridget Brereton A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962 1981: ...Dr Francis Williams, who had been born in slavery and whose mother was still a slave, was denied a license from the Medical Board although he had graduated from a British university, simply because of his slave

she was prone to exploit ambiguities that could be constructed into dialogues between master and slave. Women's propensity for loquacity and vice is the cliche of female slave character. Henry Nelson Coleridge (1825) observed that "negroes cannot be silent; they talk in spite of themselves...and their love, the sheer demand for gratification of an ardent animal desire."[37] The art of holding focus through strategic use of language would surely have survival value for women whose bodies and movements are so often described as strong, elegant and charming and whose bared breasts rarely escaped a mention in diaries of erudite male travellers. James Anthony Froude observed that "tropical human beings like tropical birds are fond of fine colours"[38] while "clothes in such a climate are superfluous for warmth, and to the minds of the negroes, unconscious as they are to shame , superfluous for decency."[39] It is ironic that these tourists so distanced from their own women would note the "animal desire" of the slave?

There is little doubt in the history of miscegenation that slave women and their daughters after emancipation, were not always victims of white male avarice. Perhaps the foulest legacy of slavery was self abasement and contempt for the inheritance of blackness. A pigmentocracy had set in place a preference for

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birth..." p.65

[37] Nelson Henry Coleridge. **Six Months in the West Indies** (1825) 1970, p.84.

[38] James Anthony Froude **The English in the West Indies** p.66.

lightness in complexion and ambitious women could exploit the abundant opportunities to experiment in a wide range of racial and colour types. The virtuosity of Black women in their quest to sharpen the noses and straighten the hair of their fairer skinned children has been immortalized by the Trinidad calypso:

> 'It (the child) isn't for me it is for stinking Potegee (Portuguese)'; 'Chi[illegible] children calling me daddy', 'Sly mongoose..mongoose went in de madam kitchen run out with she big fat chicken' (relations of the white man with the Negro cook); 'the blacker the woman, the sweeter she be'.[40]

The sexual proclivities of Black women were usually linked to her concupiscence, fecundity and the illegitimate status of her children. Women in barrack yards and slum clearance projects searching for a breadwinner or scrunting to feed their children are subject to all manner of wretchedness and men are wary of their devisive games as there is all manner of wit and will in copulation here. A woman's sexuality put out like bait to snare a provider was only a first move in a sequence routinized and reified over time.[41] Where it was possible women who hardened

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39. James Anthony Froude *Ibid* p.78.

40. Eric Williams. Inward Hunger 1969, p.18.

41. V.S. Naipaul. Miguel Street Eddoes (a garbage collector / scavenger) said sadly, "She know lots of people. She say she go make them take me away from St Clair and put me in Dry River, where the people so damn poor they don't throw away nothing... Hat said, "The calypsonian was right, you hear..'Man centipede bad. Woman centipede more than bad.' I know the sort of woman. She have a lot of baby, take the baby by the fathers, and get the fathers to pay money. By the time she 30-35, she getting so much money from so much man, and she ain't got no baby to look after and no responsibility. I know the thing. " Eddoes' woman was a kind of Spanish but the baby was Chinee but none thought him any the

themselves to ostracism from their community would seek to lighten the complexion of their children to ensure that they would be provided for in their old age.[42] The mother-child bond is nurtured and is more enduring than the bond that usually exists in male-female relationships. And a mother will have the expectation that her child, particularly her first born son, will show his gratitude by caring for her in her old age.[43] A fairer skinned daughter would have better prospects of trading in her pigment at the alter for a respectable marriage and class mobility.

In this picaroon[44] subculture the sophisticated dissociation of coitus and childbearing has not yet penetrated the consciousness of many women who are more afraid of the consequences of ar-

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less when his daughter won the Cow and Gate Baby competition.

[42] The theme of the ambitious woman in the sexual market place is personified in the comments of Mrs Harper who does the ironing for Auntie Beatrice: "Mrs Harper, who ironed the clothes as violently as if she would have liked to have been doing as much to the wearer of each garment, had a most profound aversion for Roger (Bernadette's boyfriend). When Roger strode through the house to the pantry to fling open the fridge as was his wont...the one thing that could make him recoil was Mrs Harper's features curled into a sneer as if there were a bad smell about, and as he departed in haste with his habitual smirk in disarray Mrs Harper muttered about the lil 'Panol prostitute down in the Place-Sainte who had a chile o' every breed God make and couldn' tell yu which Yankee sailorman she make that pissin'-tail runt for - what these people wouldn' scrape-up outa the rubbish-truck to sharpen they gran'-chirren nose, eh!" Merle Hodge. **Crick Crack Monkey** p.96.

[43] C.L.R. James **Minty Alley** Nurse: "..I suppose you think me a cruel mother. But Sonny is my only child and all my hopes are on him." p.47.

[44] V.S. Naipaul. **The Middle Passage** 1962. ..Slavery, the mixed population, the absence of pride and the closed colonial system have to a remarkable degree re-created the attitudes of the Spanish picaroon world. This was an ugly world, a jungle, where the picaroon hero starved unless he stole, was beaten almost to death when found out, and had therefore to get in his blows first whenever possible; where the weak were humiliated; where the powerful never appeared and were beyond reach; where no one was allowed any dignity and everyone had to impose

tificially separating ovum and sperm than the consequences of their fertility.[45] And more to the point, many Black power advocates and Rastafarian men are adamant that no woman or "queen" of their's should make a "graveyard of her womb". Attitudes to family planning are ambivalent but the women (particularly the older women) are certain that all these things could do no good while doing much harm. Family Planning Clinics are seen as wicked instruments of white supremacy dealing the final blow of racial genocide. The barren woman is ridiculed and scorned or looked on with pity that she is so cursed.[46] According to Mary Obrien (1981), the isolation of copulation and reproduction is as ancient as male dominance.[47]

The sexual domain is housed in the attitudes of the local com-

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himself; an uncreative society, where war was the only profession. p.79

[45] Although Roman Catholicism is the religion of the majority according to CSO figures 1 in 20 women reported having had an induced abortion but as the majority of abortions in the country are performed illegally, it is doubtful that this figure is accurate. Women over 30 and women of African descent had used abortion somewhat more than other groups. Jack Harewood Female Fertility and Family Planning in Trinidad and Tobago 1978, p.301.

[46] V.S. Naipaul. Miguel Street Mrs Morgan said, "life is a funny thing. I wish I has like she and couldn't make baby. And it have a woman now trying to kill sheself because she can't make baby." Eddoes said, "How you know is that she want to kill sheself for?" Mrs. Morgan shook a fat shoulder. "What else?" p. 150

[47] The isolation of the moments of sexuality from reproductive process in general is as old as male dominance, and is, indeed, a material base of that dominance. Men value the moment of sexuality for more than the immediacy of sexual gratification and the pleasures of copulation. It has symbolic value in social terms; it confirms an inclusion in genetic continuity and access to the double freedoms which the idea of paternity translates historically into forms of male dominant society. Male sexuality is thus experienced as the heart of the doctrine of potency, the potency which claims power over a natural ambiguity, obscuring the reality of men's inclusion in reproductive process is at the same time

munity where virility among men is prized and tradition accepts the belief that it is unhealthy to abstain from so basic a human need. To suppress this normal urge could result in ill health in men and women.[48] Gwen (48 yrs) insisted that as long as you are a woman "yuh must have connexion an' if yuh ain' have no husband then yuh ' be lookin' to do it wid someone else." Sex is not necessarily linked with tenderness or affection but with carnality itself. There seems some ambivalence in the assumption that sex is natural while abstinence is more pleasing unto God.[49] Among the Baptist congregation preparations for prayers and manifestations of the Holy Spirit includes an injunction on coitus for the preceding day, "like yuh have to pray an' fast an' keep away from yuh husband an' t'ing so dat yuh would be pure an' clean".

The deferential qualities expressed by young women towards their breadwinning partners often means that decisions about family planning are made by their men.[50] The deference is treated with a good deal of suspicion as impeccable cunning is a notorious female attribute but the babies are very real. "Making babies" is tied in with "proving love" for her man while he makes a trophy

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his exclusion from that process. p.191

[48] Madeline Kerr. Personality and Conflict in Jamaica pp.85-92 "You take as much as your appetite can take" "He can't keep without burning so he can't do without a wife." "He really and truly loves his wife but he will not tell her that he wouldn't look a girl to satisfy his nature when she has a baby in the house. All ten children his wife had and he went out to other women after each one's birth."

[49] The symbolism of "God" and the worship of "God" comes from a very different source to the European version. This is not a deathly white Victorian prudery launched into a corseted, closeted, angelic cosmic creator.

of his conquests among his friends.[51] Michael Lieber's work among men in this area revealed that "Trinidad men of all classes approach women first and foremost as objects to be manipulated; after that, as objects of contempt ...Black Trinidadian men tend to be self-pleased strutters. ...(M)ale identity and prerogatives transcend ethnic compassion and solidarity. ..To witness the Trinidadian man's typical attitudes and actions towards women is to observe what...is most ugly in Trinidadian life".[52] And the attitudes of men, like the ideology of power everywhere, invades the anatomy of perceptions in this parochial domain.

The literature on attitudes of parents and guardians towards sexual activity of adolescent boys conforms in the observation that permissiveness is tolerated and even admired in some quarters.[53] Boys are given much more latitude when their friendship networks or "crews" are coming together. However, there

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50. Erna Brodba. A Study of Yards in Kingston Jamaica pp.44-45.

[51] V.S. Naipaul. Miguel Street "You see.. the man leave his first wife in Tunapuna to come to Port of Spain. They couldn't have children. He remain here feeling sad and small. He go away, find a girl in Caroni and he give she a baby. In Caroni they don't make joke about that sort of thing and Bogart had to get married to the girl." "But why he leave she?" Eddoes asked. "To be a man among men." p.14.

[52] Michael Lieber. Street Scenes: Afro-American Culture in Urban Trinidad. 1981, pp.107-110.

[53] "More or less promiscuous sex relations are regarded in the West Indies as normal behaviour, and the procreation of children as the following of the laws of God and 'nature'; sexual abstinence on the part of a woman may be considered as the avoiding of a divinely imposed obligation to bear children, and, on the part of a man, as the cause of ill health. The desire to beget children is widespread and compulsive in women, the desire to avoid the burden of rearing children rare. Sterility is considered a burden the weak or sinful have to support as best they can, and a childless woman is an object of pity if she is not scorned and subjected to ridicule." T.S. Simey Welfare and Planning in

is a wide variation of observations and conclusions drawn where girls are concerned. Most agree that efforts are made to delay their onset of "friending" while violent rejection is the common response when her first pregnancy is announced. Miss Elizabeth (51 yrs) was proud to say that she was "oldtimish" when it came to that. When Sandra (29) was found to be pregnant at 14 yrs "we had a little chaos when I changed so early...very early yuh know...But he allright. He is more de supportin' type". Her mother rejected her and refused to take the baby so there was little choice but to give the child into the hands of paternal grandmother.

When Rose's (23 yrs) aunt found out that she was "talking an' t'ing" to a man "she started gettin' on. An' it cause a whole big t'ing.. My mother ended up comin' an' takin' meh. ...An' I come an' I was livin' by she in San-ratcity[54] an' she de same t'ing too an' I jus' couldn' take dem on, yuh know. ..I jus' find out everyt'ing de hard way, yes...when I grow up it wasn' easy. It wasn' easy at all! ... It was bad t'ings dey use to be sayin'. It (penis) gets in all o' yuh an' bustin' all o' yuh. Yuh can' grow up chil'ren so much. Chil'ren get afraid people when dey are so. " In this atmosphere of fears, threats and ignorance Rose runs away when her boyfriend finds a place and has her first daughter when she was 14 years old. "He use' to support me...

"Well after a while, we live for a few years good an' t'ing an' yuh know after a while when I reach an' I had sense I really

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the West Indies. 1946 pp.84-85.

[54] Ratcity and San-ratcity are names that Rose uses to refer to Shan-

didn' like he. It was because I was young, yuh know jus' so. I an' he, ..we couldn' get along after a while an' I jus' leave him. De t'ings dat he would do...'have girlfriends an' t'ing bigger an' older dan me. An' I never use' to say nothin'. I's a person I don' really like t' t'ink. I jus' keep it up inside an' den I jus' ..build a kind o' hate.. an' I jus' leave he an' I end up livin' up by m' father in Belmont. She (daughter's) father would come back for meh an' all dis kin' o' stupidness. I use' to go back after a while... go back, go back, go back. Den I get fed up... I say, 'Look yuh see meh.... an' I go end up wid a next boyfriend....After a time I get to know what character is an' I get to have sense. I didn' use to meddle wid dem. I stay by m'self, rent a place an' I will stay by m'self. I workin' an' I had a boyfriend who supports me an' everyt'ing....Den de father came back into my life again. So I say, 'Look, yuh see meh, I don' want him in my life so I have to get somebody.' So I an' Peter end up friendly an' den we come friendly an' den wid dat I does leave de t'ing. I does leave he an' I end up goin' back by m' father. (As Peter was already living with a Baptist woman from St Vincent and their 3 children in the Beetham) I stay dere an' from m' father I end up comin' here until now."

Rose had befriended Peter's common law partner and they were both members of the Baptist community. But this was definitely a case where "Your worst enemy could be your best friend, and your best friend your worst enemy".[55] "Well since Peter an' I was

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tytown.

friendin' an' t'ing yuh know, I never use' to take she on. I never really take she on because it had a night she cussed Peter down in de main street an' de t'ings she tell him.... I don' know how dat woman really lived!...He would o' never lived wid she again. Yes, he use' to tell she to go, 'til a time when he was sayin' he was leavin' she here. But it so happen dat she end up goin'. Peter does say how he fed up wid she... How she could get on. Big mout'. Dat it joke, she somet'ing else. She use' to come 'round here an' call out Peter an' get on. An' I use to say, 'Now wait: Dat yuh mother?' Yeah, I use' to say, 'Is dat yuh mother.' Hear how she callin' yuh out an' gettin' on. She somet'ing else. I didn't use' to say not'ing. If I have to tell him anyt'ing I tell him when she gone. An' when I tell him anyt'ing now he start up on me an' is how it use' to go. Dat was somet'ing else, oui! Dat was real torment....torment wid no end it look like an' still it turn' out good, yes. I stay an' bear dat, for yuh see meh, if I have to stay here, I will remain right here!"

Rose had done her homework well and learnt that Peter was very good to his woman and their children in the way he brought in a regular wage and looked after them. His mother used to lament, "My poor boy is no match for dese women. He too sof' so he have no luck wid dese women at all. He not like Nathan. Yuh t'ink women could try dat wid he. Uh, uh...He would lick dem down so hard dey would ' lucky to live. What!" Peter's mother was convinced that her son "must be had somet'ing put on him." Peter's father used to say, "Chil' yuh stupid!" The attitude that Peter's father possessed was that women were brimming with intrigue and cunning which justified the incredible lengths he resorted to in his attempts to reinstate Jan and his grandchildren. But in the end Rose proved more than his match in this volatile microcosm where all manner of prophetic forces are conjured with in the lands where sugar and spice had meant nought that was nice and among the darkest deeds have been quixotic attempts to rescue the fallen or redeem forsaken lovers. "Well, he come here eh, I was goin' good an' t'ing. Jan use' to come aroun' here an' all of a sudden, he an' Jan become good, good friends.. 'til a mornin' he tellin' she t' come in in here so Cheryl (his sick grand daughter) could sit down an' sleep in here. Well, I shock. Nolly (Peter and Jan's son) wake up an' den Jan come for dem..(For Peter say he could buy some medicine an' t'ing to rub him down now). Dis man was tellin' she t' come in ...An' I watchin' he so if she only come in inside o' here I says, 'One o' we will go out dead.' But she ain' come in... She always use' to come an' look for him an' he did hate she...well he use' to talk about she. Well I shock' to see two of dem as friend. ..Well, two o' dem was from St Vincent so yuh have to expec' dat. I don' take him on."

Peter's father believed that Rose was wicked and was possessed of Satan and so he was fighting with all the armaments known to his Baptist brethren. "When I was makin' Sean dat man stand up in front o' me, dat man de last, eh. Dat man stand up in front o' me an' tellin' me he go beat meh wid a knife. .. Yeah, an' how Sean goin' to be demon chil'.. Yes, a Devil child.' Peter's mother and father were both suspicious about Rose's fidelity. Peter's father insisted that he would not recognize Rose's children as his grandchildren. "He would tell me so. He tell Peter, how he could have time to make chil'ren wid meh, yeah. An' I didn' use' to forget an' I did push past him after dat. ... I puttin' food in front o' him, he ain' eatin' he food. ... I put food out dere. He leave it. ... So when Peter startin' off, he leavin' half he food. .. He was eatin' food. He say I givin' Peter nastiness but he eatin' food." Whatever else Rose might despise in her mother, she would bridle the respect accorded to a mother's opinion in cases of right conduct in matters of domestic discord such as this. "I tell m' mother an' dem what 'goin' on. I say, 'I ain' givin' him no food yuh know!'...Dey say, 'Gi' him, gi' him, dat Peter' father, gi' him."

Peter's father was convinced that Rose had put Obeah on his son and so he resorted to saying psalms on her. "He a next witch by heself yuh know. Dat man hates meh. Dat man use' to stay readin' psalms an' t'ing. Psalms! He does talk yuh know, but he doesn' care what he does do. All night he use' to be wid a candle an' a big bible outside dere readin'. (So his efforts were not lost from the sight of the Baptist neighbours who had sided with the forsaken Jan.) I use' to laugh. I use' to say to Peter, 'Look what your father doin'?' I say, 'Well yuh see dat, I say all dat good turn back on him. I does be hopin' it would turn back so he does behave yuh know. Yuh see, me ain' do not'ing."

Rose managed to throw her attack at the money wasted on food and pitched in with food being synonymous with the son's providence. "Yuh don' want meh food so yuh don' want not'ing from meh." and so Peter's father delivers Peter into the hold of this woman with a parting vitriolic refrain on the theme of "Chil' yuh stupid." And Rose's parting shot on the matter was loaded with irony, "Well, he was real torturous, yes!" At 23 years of age Rose has an extraordinary facility to name, define and dare to trivialize all manner of pomp. She wields words and forges reality with the versatility of any bard and torturous indeed is the prospect for anyone who would dare cross her on any road East of the Dry River.[56]

The sexualization of Miss Elizabeth (51 yrs) was carefully supervised by a father who was strict. He would allow her to attend christenings, weddings and family gatherings that presupposed a certain decorum but when it came to parties and the like she was forbidden to go. She loved to dance and could dance "too bad" but the knowledge of male character was something that she had not learnt to discern under the watchful eye of her Seven Day Adventist stepmother and as the only surviving daughter for her father. According to Miss Elizabeth (50 yrs) the father of her first daughter had a pregnant wife and several women were making babies for him at the time. What is of the essence here is not the contest but the way it is played out among the protagonists. Conven-

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55. Lyrics of a very popular reggae song by Bob Marley and the Wailers "Who The Cap Fit"...Man to man is so unjust, You don't know who to trust...

tions for male conduct insist that he "care"[57] for the child a woman bears for him. "But he de generous kind. He does sell in de market. He a butcher. He not a bad man, yes, but I find I was too young to be good, yuh know, to lead that kin' of life because he had somebody else too. She was pregnant and I was young, 19 all de way. He have other chil'ren wid plenty different women an' de lady he livin' wid. But he does support. He give Kate (30 yrs) anyt'ing..her (7) chil'ren anyt'ing. So I tell meself, instead of bein' like dis I pick up wid Joe.

I lived wid Joe for 7 years.[58] An' it was while I was wid Joe dat he come an' he get in wid her (Hester's 14-15 yr old) daughter Gloria an' makin' chil'ren wid her.[59] One day he came down an' ask me if I could keep de biggest boy... I tell him 'no'. I say, I can' keep a nex' women' child. I ain' do dat at all, sorry! He say she have to work. I say I have to work m'self so I'm not keepin' it. Well, he vex eh, he really were. Well he came back after an' ask if I could take him (the child) to live in. I say, worse! He use' to come by me an' sleep tonight, tomorrow go down, come back... yuh understand this kind of life...

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56. A Doctor Birdie would sing a line that describes this picaroon woman succinctly : "I band m' jaw an' I make up m' mind for dem"

57. The words "care" and "support" when used to refer to fathers' financial involvement with their children has nothing to do with actually handling the child or bringing up the child. These terms mean that a father brings money, food, clothes, gifts for his child.

58. In that 7 years of living with Joe Miss Elizabeth only had one daughter "for" him. This was in a period in her twenties that would be her fertile years.

59. Joe is the reputed father of 4 of Gloria's sons but he denies pater-

I say, yuh see meh, I too young for dat...I want to stay as I is. He say 'allright, Yes.' I came an' get in wid my husband. So yuh see how this does be better? Dat is years. So yuh see, I didn' have a hard life, like no knockin' about an' so on. I jus' work very hard."[60]

Miss Elizabeth and Mr John married in 1968 when she was 36 years old after she had finished making babies and Mr John had found regular work.[61] Miss Elizabeth prides herself on being hardworkin and oldtimish. "Yuh know my father brought me up very stric' 'cause when I tell yuh... When I was 16 years I use want to go to party... ain' like dese chil'ren now thirteen an' fourteen have chil'ren. I have to give him dat, he was very stric' wid meh. Concert or anybody come an' ask me for weddin'. He send me out. For when yuh see stric'ness...when yuh see six o'clock long as I in, well OK. I ain' know not'ing about party. An' I was very stric' wid my chil'ren. All of my girls leave school. Dey leave school a long time before dey get pregnant or have a

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nity of the last born son. The last son is now acknowledged as the son of the same butcher that Miss Elizabeth had her first daughter for.

[60] Perceptions of a hard life are relative in this neighbourhood and Miss Elizabeth takes pride in the fact that she has had a charmed life with her husband as he is a small islander and was keen to make a family and marry when they could afford it. He was also a steady worker and had National Insurance cover.

[61] "Marriage...is without doubt an economic institution in so far as it is regarded by the masses of the people simply as a hall-mark of economic success and social achievement, only possible if the man possesses sufficient wealth to support a family on a paternal basis. The working classes *all round the West Indies* are firmly convinced that a wife...she not be expected to work for wages outside the family, that furnishings of the house should be something approaching a lower middle-class standard, and that the wife should have a servant. The man on his

boyfriend by my house. Not many go to school...Dey can' bring nobody by my place, not til dey does come up an' ask. What yuh want, who yuh come to collec'...Very stric', very stric' I was. I have de ol' people t'ing in meh."

In fact most of the women of this age group that I spoke with gave the impression of being women of substance as they talked of their strengths and had a no-nonsense approach to life. And these same women had been discarded by men or had tolerated male sharing; they had worked as domestic servants and they had been exceptionally poor. Miss Elizabeth's no-nonsense style of talk was powerful stuff and it seemed as though image making along with the image-maker were incorrigible.

Mena (31) has had 6 children in four different relationships "Is just one father that helps me an' he minds all of dem.. Is just one father. Well de first one have not'in an wasn' able to give us. He started to have friends an' drink rum an' we quarrel an' fight. His friends use' to come an' call him to go an' drink. An' de second one I chase he aroun' an' he like to fight an' de t'ird one I had two of dem for he, t'ree of dem...de one dat died was for he. De one dat I have two for, he mindin' we...He was livin' here too but as de friends he had were not encouragin' so he use' to leave an' go an' lime an' t'ing. Well I still sees he. In '75 I had a second baby for him. It was when I started to have two or t'ree dat he started to be really bad. Yuh know, he use' to be nice before but when I started to have chil'ren for him he changed. He started gettin' in wid other women. Yeahs, but I have a last baby dat is not his but dat is because de both of us not together. I had a other friend an' I come an' I have dis baby for him. Well I don' know he just stopped comin' an' I never go an' look for he yuh know. Well when she was a baby he use' to mind her but when she came to about 8 to 9 months he stopped. An' when I went after him de fella tell me dat he went away an' I can'... I never really find out not'ing about him. He came an' visit her twice. He have 3 other chil'ren. He wanted us to be back together but I told him.. well I have intentions of gettin' married to de fella dat I have de 2 chil'ren for. Right now I just waitin'. He livin' up Belmont wid somebody and he say he have one daughter in Tobago..must be about 5 or 6 years. Sometimes he have problems for he livin' by a lady and she would try to have him all for herself. (She had one baby that reached 5 or 6 but that child died). I always say she can' do dat because I always say, well dat will be my husband. I always hold dat belief dat we must get back together so she wouldn' get her hand on him to stop him from mindin' dem." There are some problems for Mena as the man who provides support does not always keep up his payments. "Daddy helps me den. An' I have a brother dat does help. An' when my sister workin' well she will put in somet'ing (while I mind her child)... I might go out to work when dey go out to school. When my little girl go out to school too. She is 3 years an' de baby... Because I really want to get some money. I was studyin' to go an' make roti an' work wid somebody."[62] At the mo-

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side expects his wife to be completely faithful to him. T. S. Simey *Ibid* 1946, p.85.

ment, Mena has a sewing machine at home to do piece work on while she is taking care of her own children plus the children of her sister and a friend who also lives in the 2 bedroom house.[63] Mena is forced to rely on support from her own kin and to pull in what little money she can from her sewing and whatever she gets for minding the children. She hopes that her own daughters will wear beautiful clothes and the one that loves children will be a teacher or a nurse so that she can satisfy her yen and pull in her own dollars.

The more mature woman who has gained some distance from the value orientation of pleasing her man, is more likely to reconsider the values of family limitation and select her partner/s with greater concern for her own survival through the prospects of her children.[64] Women would often remark that they went through a process of *getting sense* when they stopped trying to fit into the structure of male pleasing. Their bruises, physical and psychological, made it obvious that this strategy was not working for them. In Jessica's (39 yrs) opinion it is men who have the upper hand while women keep trying. She has no illusions about the politics of sex. Jessica has turned to prostitution as "

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62. Mena's mother had 10 surviving children and used to have a roti stand before a stroke paralyzed one side of her body. Mena tried to continue on when her mother was unable but eventually she was placed in St Dominique's Orphanage as her parents could not cope.

63. Household composition of 9 children (ranging from 13 yrs to baby) and 4 adults.

64. Jack Harewood and Norma Abdulah (1978) indicated that women over 30 admitted having more induced abortions and also knew more methods of birth control.

just one t'ing, one t'ing for a woman yuh know...a sort of bread for the everyday routine and circumstances." Besides "the more woman is good the worse she gets treated". Jessica insists that "men are playin' games, yuh know. They are not really out to really have a wife or to stand up wid a woman. They are only out for one t'ing. They have sex with a woman and really give her some money but they don' really want to settle down...all over is the same. ...Yuh know, few women can really stand up. So that is why men keep runnin' around and payin' for sex. ..It is cheaper that way. Yes, that is how they devise it."

Jessica reveals that when she was married and living with her East Indian husband and six children she had to steal his money while he was asleep to buy her medicine[65] and "economize in a deep fashion" because her husband wanted her to get out of the house to make way for a next woman. "I had to give him the divorce. Yuh know, these women and so on. .. He was an Indian and yuh know Indians are really a kind of ungrateful type of people, yes. Very hard to get along with and they are set in their own ways. Especially the men... I had it very tough with him...Hardly anyt'ing for the home. No comfort or what a man should do in a home, he never did. And if he saw me talkin' with anybody he didn' want me to have friends at all...or go out or enjoy myself in any way... I could just be in the home and up and down with the children and just make what he brought in do. And I couldn' stand it and I went out to work... When he goes to the grocery, whatever he brings I abide with. ...I am left alone whole night alone when the children go to sleep I am just left alone lying down in my bed or just lookin' out. An' sometimes very late and maybe he has been screwin' with his friends and then come in. right.

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[65] Jessica would resort to the more expensive bush medicine or obeah practitioner even though free medical services were available at the general hospital.

"...I went to this party and after a while I came in. But that aroused him now and he said that he was going to kill me. So that is how the relationship ended, because he really did try to kill me. That same night yes. I went to bed and while in my sleep he attacked me with a piece of iron ... He wasn' drunk. That is how Indian men are. Yuh understand...broke up all my ribs, yes, ... I was bleedin' internally, my lung collapsed... Yes, and after doing so much for my husband makin' blood out of stone for him ...and he has no appreciation for the t'ings that I did or how I try. .. Most of my clothes and t'ings, people gave me an' I use' to feel so guilty, people givin' me t'ings an' I have a husband. He should have been able to finance me and give me little t'ings, right?

"... And I had, I got nervous breakdown. .. I was really in a terrible condition. I didn' know m'self. My nerves had all gone to shreds. He (husband) dere but he was of no help because he use' to do t'ings that to make me actually sick more...say t'ings and do t'ings to upset meh. ..Yes, and God did help because I had reached a point where I thought I was going to die...it was grief and everyt'ing mixed together.

".. When I saw that he was actively wanting a divorce and tellin' me to go from his house and all that.. I should have left. But I was studyin' the chil'ren... It is very difficult for a woman to leave her chil'ren." Jessica escaped with her life. "I never took my chil'ren into custody because I realise' this grave problem. And if he has them in his home he has the custody of them an' I don' have to be wonderin' all the time to go there an' they (men) ain have the money and yuh have to go back to law. It's a whole problem...It is a real problem because they don' know the effect that this has on women.[66] Now women are being forced to go maybe to prostitution an' t'ing like illegal things that they don' really want to do but they are forced because of the circumstances."

Jessica wouldn't mind another husband but the ring and title are not worth the whole set of problems. She would rather be left alone than face these difficulties.."It really doesn' make sense... I don' see why a woman have to go an' beg an' beseech a man."[67] The man she had the last baby for "use to come and stay.. but as soon as I got pregnant he disappeared altogether and he never came back. It was as if he was only comin' to get me pregnant. Yuh know, as if it would add a burden to my burdens yuh understand...As soon as I knew I was pregnant nobody knows where

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66. Calypso: 'Christmas morning I wake up early to see what Father Christmas bring for me. He bring a police in a short pants looking like Jack Palance and a warrant for wife maintenance.'

67. Jessica came up in Belmont and attended secretarial collage so this marriage and divorce has meant a considerable slide down the social ladder. She had very different expectations of marriage than the experience that she had and is left confused and poor.

he is... that is why women have to be careful...Yuh have to be very careful because yuh don' know what is layin' over your head."

This child is something of a reassurance for Jessica as it proves that she is still whole, she could still make a baby after being the victim of her husband's attempt to murder her. "She is a nice child. I thank God for her anyways because I had six already and I don' have dem with me an' she is the only one I have...I thank God for her in spite of the circumstances. Yuh just have to adaptate yuh know, and don' get confused about everyt'ing and it will work out." Jessica feels that it is time for action. "I find men are takin' advantage...too much advantage on women. ...I find they should pass drastic laws. Yes, they should pass very drastic laws for these circumstances. For now this thing does be comin' as a practical joke."

Jessica is convinced that her world is defined by her gender as she can't see a way through the maze without being confronted by the currency of sexual politics as men exploit women unashamedly. She has applied through Legal Aid for child maintenance but is reconsidering as she would have to name the father. "I said I prefer not to have anyt'ing from the real father even though my circumstances are bad because yuh see, he is a man that if he knows they are pullin' out money then he may want to come here to kill me. Knowin' that I am gettin' his money, yuh know, an' he don' have the uses of me. Yuh know how these men is. And they should be able to understand this because takin' money from him now would be very dangerous so I don' want to have to ... I prefer to take money from another man. That's plain as day could be, yuh understand. I don' want to go to him to take money because it wouldn' be profitable for me."

By prostituting herself, Jessica is able to get other men to pay for her child. To her this is a safer proposition than trying to garnishee the father's income. But she is having problems with this line of work as her husband has not really disappeared from the scene and is still making things difficult. "My husband is a very influential man and if he see any man hangin' aroun' me, he causes a problem. Yuh see, he sees people who would call and tell them t'ings to keep them off. If people come to me, the mens, yes, even the neighbours aroun' here, it isn' easy, they will tell them... Not to come into me or they don' know who to be callin' so they know....So I really under a lot of pressure. They don' want to see yuh have anybody or even marry again as such."

Just to get through, Jessica has to adopt a strategy to cope with harsh gender realities. "It is the whole atmosphere yuh know. For you to get t'rough they want to live with you. And of course, the National Housing permanent housing officer, he tells me that he is trying to get a place for me...but before he can ever do that he said well Friday...And before I get a house I know he does want a sexual relationship... He wouldn' come and just give me a house like that yuh understand. So you have to hand up your body to these men to get through here... That is the whole thing. Some people get a good job and you just have to hand up first to get your job. And yuh know, yuh have to give them your money and all that to keep that goin'. I get frustrated yuh know, and if yuh talk too much they put a lot of burdens on yuh.... So they feel good now that I have a child and I have to come to them for help. ... And they always glad to get you in a corner. So as long as I am in Trinidad they are goin' to try to pressurize me. The best thing for women to do around here is just to see and don' see and keep your mouth shut and they don' give yuh any burdens at all." Jessica concludes that as a woman she has to do what she has to do to get by. It does not serve her well to speak out as she says that it is better to see and not see, speak and keep your mouth closed. The older women have refined this strategic use of perception and expression to a remarkable degree. They select only self preserving opportunities, they know the channels and what delicate balance is essential for their survival.

Fiona (38 yrs) and her friend Gloria (42 yrs) one street down, prefer having visiting unions. "If dey go by yuh, dey go by... an' if dey don' go by yuh, O.K. Dey don' go by force, dey go by will... I strong an' dat true. I sure it true... Some say dey don' want married...Some say dey don' want to live wid no man in dey house right. Dey live where dey jus' come an' go, understand?" Fiona had a common law union for 15 years on and off but she "did catch hell wid dat man, Oh God! Yuh see he was wid m' mother before she die. An' sometimes he would come over here too an' take me back over. He married now...but still he could come back." Fiona insists that if a woman has her own place, she should be a free agent and if a man wants to "get back in" he has to "do right by she".

Gloria (42) insists that her man should bring money and no gifts as she does not want her "furnitures" moving house. When a man is moving on or in this case, staying with the woman he is living with, it is only the man that passes through her door. "My house ain' walkin' no place." Male sharing is taken for granted and these women are no longer putting their bodies between their men and their other women. They have their work, their children are able to care for themselves and they want to hold onto the money they earn for themselves and have some money coming in from their working children.

Marion (45 yrs) prefers a visiting union at this stage as she has had her share of "trouble" with men. "He start lashin' me since after I had de second child for him. An' I didn' have nowhere else to go an' I use to sleep with a fear. Yuh can' jus' live so widout having friends an' widout talkin' to nobody... An' he get on wid other women as well. Well, when he did work, he buy rum an' he drink out all of his money dat remains. After I come an' get a little sense an' de chil'ren gettin' bigger.. I make up m' mind to see my way to go an' I ain' come back. .. He still feel to come an' harass me. ..If yuh have a man, is not to live with, no. Come an' go. Yeahs, dis is de t'ing. Visit an' go. But I don' want nobody to come an' take over again. I t'ink dat mister a little too comfortable now."

Women's Labour : Productive and Reproductive Identity.

> The separation of life from necessity is in the first instance an ideological separation, a yearning and a dream of the sweet sunshine always outside the cave of the contradictions of carnality. The move to transform necessity to ideology, and ideology to social practice, entails tremendous struggles, and can be maintained only by continuous and active vigilance. The social structures which emerge from attempts to separate life from necessity are the *division of classes* in the productive realm and the *division of public and private life*, of family and polity, in the reproductive realm. The grounds of these separations lie in the dialectical structure of the processes of productive labour and biological reproduction, the series of alienations, negations and mediations which structure the way experience is thought about. ...The ultimate ethical appeal of Greek thought is to the natural, which is the paradigm of the Good.[68]

The mother child bond is evidenced by many Caribbeanists as the single most enduring female characteristic after slavery and in post emancipation society in the West Indies. In my work however, the complex of kinship and social arrangements hinged on the fragile links between employers and employees and beyond that the fundamental necessity to pull in resources for basic household needs; for existence of the household itself. Girls and women are intimately involved in the struggle to survive as families or households within the constructs of local standards

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68. Mary O'Brien The Politics of Reproduction 1981 p.141.

and community values. Work, like other forms of cultural experience is both instrumental and expressive within individual and labour relations in society. How the work is performed and who does the work is mediated in such a way that people assume that occupation is identity linked.

Female identity straddles reproductive and productive realms as the lower class woman weaves her way in the stark reality of economic viability and household maintenance. She knows herself from within an ideology of an habitual social practice. The centrality of female labour in the domestic economy is understood while reproductive labour often throws kin together. The parochial conjugal bonds of sentiment and affection are constructed of less enduring stuff than the blood ties of kinship especially in households where the mother or grandmother is the galvanizing force of the family or household grouping. The influence of a woman's father and brothers fills gaps in arrangements for child support but it is generally understood that the reputed father should provide.[69] Similarly, a child whose parents live in separate households would probably see more of their uncles than their fathers.

In many households the young mother goes out to work while her children are cared for by their grandmother, aunt or godmother.[70] The female headed household or grandmother family form is a common phenomenon of proven economic viability.[71] And the fundamental arrangements of kinship transmission and co-operative effort are enshrined in an incipient legitimation of expected conduct. This communalism of kinship relations is understood and furnished with a vocabulary that children here grow up in as part of enculturation and socialization processes. Where the grandmother takes over responsibility for her grandchildren the domestic economy depends on support from those members who have work, particularly their sons. The mother-son bond is such that men will support their own mothers before giving any support to those women who have made children for them. In many cases the grandmother will board a man or take in laundry from a bachelor to add to the common household fund. The young mother's influence over her children will correlate with the size of her contribution to the fund and the nature of her domestic involvement. Some grandmothers mind the children while the young mother does the cooking, sewing, laundry, ironing and cleaning after coming in from doing these same chores in a middle class home.

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[69] Where women head households the men contribute to the household budget. Where a grandmother rears her grandchildren the funding from sons goes towards the upkeep of the children and the degree of control over the upbringing of her children for many mothers is in proportion to the financial contributions to the household. See Raymond T Smith and Christine Barrow.

It is not unique to lower class Trinidad culture to find that domestic labour is exclusively female. Thus while both genders are employed outside the home or have some form of financial autonomy, the women are responsible for cooking and cleaning while men 'help' in these domestic labours. However, most women would agree that they have the 'business head' in the household.[72] And the way women can stretch meagre financial resources is testimony to the validity of this claim as we shall hear as women articulate with a measure of pride at this aptitude.

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[70] Indicate the number of women in the study who lived in this domestic arrangement or who grew up in such an arrangement.

[71] Henriques; Kreiselman; Raymond T Smith; Nancie Solien de Gonzalez; Melville and Francis Herskotvitz; Hyman Rodman

V.S. Naipaul suggested that multiracial Trinidad had a long standing ethnic division of labour that was so entrenched that Trinidadians themselves are hardly aware of it.[73] For just as one would expect a pundit to be East Indian man and a Pentecostal preacher to be Afro-Trinidadian man, so too the Indian coconut vendor and the Negro carpenter or mason. The bakery business is white or Chinese and the laundry business also Chinese (never mind who does the work in the back room). The Syrian or Lebanese man is a shop owner. The grocery store and the rum parlour with the little gambling section was also Chinese. Among women tradition would have Indian roti vendors and Negro purveyors of bush and provision. If I were to purchase an orange while picking up a drop car around Independence Square I would expect it to be peeled and cut by a Negro woman's hand. And if I were to purchase a little souse and black pudding the same would be true. The ethnic markings on employment are not as obvious in contemporary Trinidad but the genderic divisions are quite marked.[74]

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[72] quote from Miguel Street

[73] V.S. Naipaul The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies - British, French and Dutch - in the West Indies and South America 1962, pp.185-186. and Flag on the Island 1967, 10. The Baker's Story. pp.122-123. This theme has been taken up by Sidney Mintz elsewhere.

[74] Lloyd Braithwaite Social Stratification in Trinidad (1953) showed

There were local stereotypes that were part of the times because they were part of the socio-political reality. The characters within the ethnic melange were: the French 'pedigree' plantocrat, the English expatriot in the Civil Service, the Chinese merchant (especially the Chinese grocer, laundry, restaurant and bakery), the Spanish cacao planters and importers, the Negro urban dwellers, the coloured professionals and the Indo-Trinidadian peasant farmers in the rural sector. Each group of immigrants was typed as there had not been time to settle into a multicultural tapestry and many immigrants were birds of passage, seeking goals beyond the shores of the Caribbean.

Women from the East Dry River entered employment via an informal route providing services as domestic employees, then washer women or laundresses, bar girls, prostitutes and waitresses, then they moved into janitorial services, or found work where they could be independent of the contentious employer-employee relationship by doing dress-making, huckstering or vending from the street, the market or direct from their homes, taking in laundry for bachelors, boarding somebody and / or minding children for working mothers (usually kin). The work performed depended on formal and informal educational background, the woman's age and union status, the number of children she had and the arrangements for childcare, kinship ties and her position in the household. Most of the women had their names down for unemployment relief

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that the social pyramid was ethnically marked: black at the base and white at the peak with wedges of mobility favouring pigments of lighter hue.

work with DEWD at that time although very few were 'getting through' and had to try to hustle whatever opportunities presented themselves to make a 'bread'.[75] Women continued to do anything they could get or sell anything they could find or make and take project work when their names came up. With a little ingenuity or deduction from their pay to the foreman or checker, they could do a "little ha'f hour or so" at DEWD then go about their usual round. Similarly, the older women received their pension and continued to work in the informal sector of the economy just as they had done throughout their lives.

There was an exceptional young woman who worked as a mason at WASA. She was accustomed to hard work and determined to finish building her own house with her carpenter boyfriend at weekends and after work. I also met a young woman who worked in a tyre repair shop and gave as good as she got from the men she worked on the floor with. And one 23 year old mother of 4 children, whose common law husband has eight children to support, wants to be a policewoman and is getting information from friends who were in training. There was another young 18 year old woman who had taken a job as a security guard because the money was good and she needed shift work that would allow her to be with her young children during the day.

These women are not attracted to these jobs because they are radicals making inroads to traditional male occupations. They are exploiting opportunities that are there. Besides, a job is a job in a climate of high unemployment. "She have to like it because yuh can' get no work nowhere else. It is hard to get, so yuh have to take what yuh get. An' de fella she have de chil' for wasn' really workin'." The ideas pertinent to modern business practice of personnel management including job satisfaction, a career track with graded stages of advancement or horizontal movement within the hierarchy is a fantasy for women who hustle just to make a living or "a bread".

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[75] Women very matter of factly gave the reasons for other women not 'getting through' as "must be she can' have no boyfriend dere"; "No Godmother to really look after her"; "Is only young girls dey puttin' on". Corruption was taken for granted the issue was to how to 'get through'.

Aida's grandmother with the wisdom of years of local knowledge about the way things are arranged along productive and reproductive lines quipped, "Yuh know, when a girl's belly ' flat she don' know how to work; after she belly fat she can' not work." What Aida's grandmother understands perfectly is that childbirth for women marks the transformation or rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. The mother is made fully aware of what it means to "care" for a child. She is forced by her plight to fight up with the father of her child in a society where men are irregular when it comes to such mundane concerns as providing adequately for their children.[76]

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[76] In Trinidad women do have expectations that men will be supportive providers, but these expectations reflect hope and desire more than any realistic conviction that men will in fact behave in this way... Most of the men I knew tended to regard women as sexual objects and little more. Although these men proclaimed great love and respect for mothers...women (generally were) to be exploited for their sexual availability, their services, and sometimes for their money. ...Men, greedy for their freedom and aloof in their relationships with women, are hardly then in a position to enforce women's behavior and movements as they so often are in other societies ...woman's freedom is illusory...Black

Women's words make it overwhelmingly clear that any sense of self cannot be divorced from productive and reproductive labour. Their work is primarily based in the informal sector of the economy. It is characterized by its marginality and low status, being menial, outside of union or organized protection and invariably poorly paid.[77] Women do not hold out much hope of gaining a career opportunity after they have their first child (if indeed they had dared to dream of this being possible beforehand) but it is imperative that they "work". Even when I ask Helen (26 yrs) to dream of a perfect life she imagines "a nice little place, a nice little work an' all m' chil'ren goin' to school an' to home." Phoebe (37 yrs) with her customary realism proclaimed: "I work, I work, I work...I do domestic work, I do waitress ...I did cashier work...now I do handicraf'." Denise (34 yrs) who made her first child when she was 12 years old explained, " I make kids an' for survival yuh have t' look for work t' do. An' up to a year or two I still hustlin'...Yuh have t' take it, de money is never too much...Dat is how Black people suppose' to be eh. Yuh jus' look for somet'ing. Yuh can' sit down en' get everyt'ing yuh know. If

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Trinidadian men tend to be self-pleased strutters. ...(M)ale identity and prerogatives transcend ethnic compassion and solidarity... To witness the Trinidadian man's typical attitudes and actions toward women is to observe what, together with the abuses generated by economic greed and rapacious lust for status at the expense of others, is most ugly in Trinidadian life. Michael Lieber Street Life: Afro-American Culture in Urban Trinidad. pp.107-110.

[77] In October 1973 99.4% women earnt less than $100 per week and 50% earnt less than $10 per week. Jack Harewood Caribbean Demography Workbook: Part A. ISER 1976 p.77.

it ever come, yuh have t' look for it." And Miss Elizabeth (51 yrs) who is married and caring for her grandchildren while her son and daughters go out to work says, "I really, really work already yes! I really work already... Yuh have to work very hard.. Yuh have to work. For I have me chil'ren small an' dey have to get to school clean an' I have to see about dem...dat is to confirm I all de t'ings I say I is, I have to work." Francis (74 yrs) who still sells ice and is called on to heal members of her community reflected, "I fight my way all de way. Don' mind I poor, I could work an' pay my way." Lora (76 yrs) put work succinctly in place for all her sisters when she said "I don' know m'self widout I workin', all de time I knowin' m'self I work." And Lora is still boarding a man for lunch and cooking cow heel soup, cou cou and callaloo for a Portuguese family for their Sunday lunch. In fact, there was not a woman I spoke with who did not make statements that placed work and identity in one mould. How they worked and what they did essentially marked them as belonging to an age, a class, an ethnic community and even to their geographic location.

Most of the women entered the world of work before they entered the labour force as the domestic arrangements assumed that certain tasks would be assigned to children. Eunice (39 yrs) chuckled that she wanted to go to school when she was a child, "When I was small I want to go to school all de time because when I home I have too much of work to do.. Plantin' garden, takin' care of de younger ones, washin'...an' yuh parents an' dem would break yuh play... An' yuh know how chil'ren love to play an' play an' play? An' it was licks yuh know!...So school wasn' really borin' for me man." The children of colonial Trinidad had a very different childhood to the children who came after Williams made Education a national priority. Work in the home prepared young girls for domestic employment in middle class homes.

The older women had a lot to say about their work around the home as young girls. Miss Elizabeth (51 yrs) grew up in Point Fortin with her father and her step-mother after her mother died when Beth was 5 years old. She was the only child for her step-mother and so we do not hear about having to consider brothers and sisters as her own twin died and there were no others. What we also learn is that for Miss Elizabeth the things she learns in the home equip her for her vocation and later family life. "She (stepmother) learned me to do everyt'ing an' when I was from nine years I use' to wash make flour bread..do everyt'ing man... an' I was nine years. She was adventist eh... She does go to church on a Saturday. On Saturday she would do nothin', cause she ain' puttin' no hand in no fire... All Saturday she would be gone from mornin' til night an' from de time she gone I evaporatin'."

"My father was a butcher...'use to sell in de market, beef. My father was very big an' fat. Had a big paunch. An' his pant an' t'ing was make so I wash. I take a stick an' I well scrub dem, wash dem. Like dose days was corn stick... an' I starch dem. She went to San Fernando, dat was comin' up to Christmas an' she went to shop, to buy curtains an' t'ing.[78] I wash an' iron, but de ironin' part was hard...I was small eh, I was to stan' up on somet'ing an' I went to iron it. An she show me how to iron a pants. My school clothes I use' to wash it for meself, iron it for m'self. Comb m' own hair. I didn' use to trouble her because she wasn' m' mother eh."

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[78] Local custom has women redecorating their houses to celebrate Christmas. So it is that the stepmother goes all the way to San Fer-

"She would bring red fish for me to scrape scale an' clean. An' when I done finish, she say, yes, it clean good. I learn, an' t'ings what she didn' show me I catch up. All such like makin' puncha creme...own own self. Look, ice-cream, I could make a good, good icecream. When dose people does have fete an' does want icecream dey send for meh to make it. So I use' to make t'ings an' nobody showed me what to do eh. I knead flour an' we had a dirt oven in de yard. An' I pick m' black sage bush an' coil it round, an' sweep m' fire jus' how I see she doin'. An' yuh put a wet bag for de cover. I bake bread like hell. I mix m' leaven when I see how she doin' it. Dat time was block yeast. I took butter, I took lard an' I put salt an' water... just how I see she do it. I roll it out an' I cut fig leaf...cause we had plenty limes eh' I grease it an' I put it in de oven an' I fix it. When I tell yuh dat bread did come out good! An' she say, 'Yuh do dat very well.'"

"A day again she wasn' dere I bake a cake jus' like she did do. I go an' get de salt butter...I put dat wid m' sugar get de egg beater , bring de egg an' a saucer. I take out de yolk an' I

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nando to buy materials to make her house ready. The men are set to work painting and making furniture.

beat up m' egg nice.. An' we always have bottles wid fruits an' rum soakin' in a jar. I boil sugar in a iron pot, I burn de sugar an' when it burn I t'row it just how I see she do it. Who tell yuh I can' make back cake? It tastin' real hard... An' from dat I learn to do my own t'ings for meself. I was nine years goin' on ten years...An' it had earth oven, coal pot an' nothin' about 'lectric lights. Hard iron to iron...put it in de fire an' wipe it wid a piece of cloth an' put it on. Flat iron, yeahs, an' it iron very nice..very smooth an' nice. Eh, Mama yuh remember dat?"

"Cause when she gone I glad, I have de whole house for meself. I knead flour... I made jam... I pick pomme-cythere.. I had good sense. My step mother learned me everyt'ing. She use' to bake cake for weddin' an' t'ing an' I use' to stand up an' watch. I watch she doin' it..simple as dat. When she gone I make mas. I use' to cook my father food every Saturday. I ain' boastin' but not everybody could make dese t'ings what! I like t' make all does t'ings an' I does teach m' chil'ren. My son stan' up behin' me. He cook a good pillau. Yeahs, yuh suppose to know, man' an' woman eh. As yuh a man yuh can' do dis... yuh have t' learn. As people don' know what does befall dem."

Miss Elizabeth is very proud of these skills that she has perfected as they bring her recognition in her local community. "She's a boss, boy! Bread, sweetbread, cassava pone, all o' dat she could make." And when she describes her youthful attempts to imitate her stepmother, she goes into considerable detail as to the timing of these procedures as she does not read the recipes or follow written instructions but remembers what she saw her stepmother's hands doing. In the original transcription the story repeated the refrain, "Just how I see she doin' it" or "Just how I see she hand so".

Miss Elizabeth went to school at St Thomas Aquinas Intermediate in Point Fortin. .."Well I didn' reach seventh standard...That does mean to say I can read an' I can write an' I know anyt'ing. 'Cause long time we didn' have..sometimes chil'ren from Chinese an' no classes. ...I was 16 to 17 years ol' an' I leave an' I went an' work in a place call Clifton Hill. I use' to work with white people... I came in town with a God sister of mine...which is to say, her mother stay for meh.[79] ... I tell m' father well I want to come... I want to go because I never been to Port of Spain. An' I came in town wid dem, right an' live at South Quay. it had a garage dere an' we did live in de yard. An' I live dere until I come an' get in wid de first daughter' father. .. Well I do one or two servants work very well yuh know. Washin' an' ironin'..."

"When I had me chil'ren small I use' to work out. I work for Chinese bakery people. ...We use' to work nowhere for no big set of money, eh. In dose days yuh have to work hard. Yuh cook, yuh have to clean out, to wash for one mornin' an' yuh have to go on a Sunday...De onliest day yuh might stay home is Christmas day ... Carnival yuh have to go to work too. J'ouvert Monday and Tuesday yuh have to go early an' come out. Some say seven some say ha'f pas', dey have to go to work so yuh have to reach before dey go.

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[79] To 'stay' for a child is to be a godparent.

Madams was very lazy too eh. Some of dem would lay down in deir bed an' wouldn' do a stroke. An' yuh turn your back an' yuh catch de madam comin' an' doin' dis sort of t'ing (flicking a finger over the surface) for de dust yuh know. An' dat is what I use' to get vexed for. I use' to do work very hard. But I very annoyed when I see dat. For if yuh tellin' me to do so, so, so..I don' see why yuh go behin' m' back to see." Phoebe (37 yrs) recalls similar situations when she was working as a domestic. She shared a common passionate revulsion for the authoritarian style of these madams, "because dey say, 'do dis! Do dat!'...I did not like dem to bawl dat way. I workin' for yuh an' I have dis to do, I do it... If I have dis to clean out, I will clean it up an' if I sit down...Now, for now, don' bawl behin' meh...'Oh Lord have mercy, I does get vex'. I can' take on dat... yuh know, Yuh come an' yuh say, 'Look, yuh want so, so here an' so, so.,... An' I will say, 'All right'...but don' come back an' tell meh...'so what happen..?' Dat would get meh vex' because yuh know yuh done tell meh once already an' all I have is to do it an' it will be done. Dey t'ink yuh mad! I can' take on dat."

In Miss Elizabeth's day there were not too many opportunities so she had to find ways to make domestic work tolerable. It was common to look out for work constantly and change employers often. She learnt early that the laundress work is more profitable and there is a more equitable arrangement between the employer and herself as she can manage several jobs and so spread the risk if she decides to leave one home to find work at another. "It was a few years well I workin'. Well I come an' I work nearly a mont' right. I was ironin' an' yuh have plenty white shirts. When yuh see dem come, lunch time dey drop a shirt an' when it evenin' dey drop a shirt...So 12 long sleeve white shirt' alone eh...An' she (the madam) come an' she take de iron an' showin' meh how to iron a shirt. I stan' up an' I watch her an' when she done I say, 'Madam, from de time I here, washin' an' ironin', yuh find any fault wi' me clothes? ...Or yuh son.' She say, 'No.' 'An' so why yuh come take m' iron an' showin' me how to iron a shirt?' 'Nothin'... I say,'Well I don' like dat yuh know. Because all de time I washin' n' ironin' dese shirts an' no fault....I can' see why yuh should find fault now..Just so' (She describes her method of ironing shirts in detail)..'So I don' see no fault in she comin' to take de iron from me to show me how to iron.

"...An' I say, 'Yuh know somet'ing. Yuh money yuh payin' me isn' enough. $20 a mont' yuh payin' me to wash, iron...a mont' yes.' She had some men workin' on de house fixin' paint an' dey now watchin'. I say, 'Madam I does come early in de mornin', I does wash, I ironin' an' still if yuh have somet'ing to do extra I do it 'cause yuh servant ain' come. Is $20 a mont' I workin' for. Yuh t'ink $20 could mind meh? An' I have to pay transportation up to here.' She say, 'Allright..allright, allright. I will give you $25 a mont'. ' I say, 'Right'. After I done, a servant she had workin', a Badian woman, she say she workin' dere 13 years

..She say, 'I like yuh style girl...$20! Everybody who come here washin' an' ironin' dey didn' use' to do like you. Uh uh!' And Hester (64 yrs) came in with, "A.A. Jackson de same t'ing. T'irty dollars I use' to get an' I use' to cook, go to market, eh, eh! An' I went an' advise her (Miss Elizabeth) an' she went an' work dere too." Miss Elizabeth: 'I work by A.A. Jackson, washin' an' ironin'... I like dat yuh know. Dat is why I have plenty colds.

I love washin' an' ironin' because yuh do t'ings to suit you... Yuh home Christmas an' Carnival. So I always like laundress an' from early I took 2 works. Dat is all de work I do. Because when yuh washin' an' yuh ironin' yuh haven' got to go in no seven o'clock. Yuh make yuhself reachin' de madam place ha'f pas' eight, quarter to nine because yuh go dere washin' an' yuh ironin' right. An' if yuh go to wash an' sun out in t'ree days time yuh can' work an' yuh can go somewhere else again an' draw a next ironin. I always say, 'I love m' laundress. ... Is only now I lookin' so so I may be small, but not sick eh? Never go in de hospital to lie down in dere. E'en when I make m' chil'ren.. come out washin' an' t'ing. I didn' have nobody helpin' an' t'ing. I make m'self harden, not dat yuh should overdo it eh... but yuh can' make yuhself too soft."

Lora (76 yrs) was born in Tobago and became a housegirl or schoolgirl. The story she tells reveals a clash of world views. "I did a little (school), not plenty school, only a little. I go to live wid a lady dat was over dere yuh know so I could take care of her yuh know. She had no family only herself and her husband so I used to stay wid dem...Yeahs, I go shop, I go to de market an' come back an' stay wid dem. My mother take me to dem from small an' dey say how dey like me.. an' how dey would take me along to my country an' dat is how I come from Tobago to here...I livin' wid de people a long time an' after dat lady did leave..I went an' stay wid dat person (in Woodbrook) a little time an' den we get married (when Lora was 36 yrs). She always uses to say, yuh must married, yuh mustn' live in sin. ...Yeahs, dey like a lot of church..Dey went to Trinity."

The relationship between Lora and her employer was a quasi-family arrangement where Lora was kept in subjection by a concoction of prejudice and benevolence as the disparity of class and race is wielded like the 'whip' of old. Lora's loyalty, gratitude and deference is mixed with being made to feel ashamed of her own culture and class membership. "I does like Carnival yuh know but yuh see how I brought up. De lady...she go to de church...goin' to de church, goin' 'to de church. She would tell me, go an' see how dis lady feelin', go an see....She use' to make me feel like dead people was her work. She use' to feel dat de carnival was de devil work...'Oh my dey belong to de devil'...especially de fella wid de chain about his head, de jab jab.. An' she like to talk about him...Yeahs, an' she would say, 'You get down from dere (Lora tried to climb on the gate for a better view). If de Lord sees yuh he will laugh at yuh, yuh know.' But I would like to start up an' I would like to see de dancin' I would like to start to dance when I look at dem. I like de music an' t'ing an' I like de steel band. I like to see dem jumpin'."

If carnival and Lora's Moravian religion placed her among the ranks who offended her lady's church and God, then having a baby without the sanction of wedding vows condemned her as belonging in her skin. "Yuh see what happened was de strictness. Yuh see I came up in de ol' days when I was afraid. Oooh, I was afraid yuh know. After I get dis child I didn' married yuh know. An' I was livin' at de people an' I went an' I had dis little child. Den when dey found out what was happenin' dey say dey would send me back to my mother. But de husband said, 'No, we have her since she was a little girl. We won' send her back we will keep her an' she would do better.' An' I remain' dere an' never worried myself wid nobody. I keep myself quiet an' t'ing, yeahs. An' I lived dere all de time wid de lady. An' she say, 'but if you have more chil'ren yuh have to move from here. We don' want more chil'ren here because we belong to de church an' I don' want de people to come from de church an' see yuh here wid baby.' When I was havin' de baby I never came outside to be seen yuh know. When people come dey use' to tell me to move inside so people wouldn' see." In 1926, the puritan ethic was pervasive and the kind of treatment that Lora (then 20 yrs old) received was not uncommon. In her employment she experienced first hand the conflicting world views of two cultures.

When the baby was born things were different, "When I have de chil' she like it. An' bring me to have de chil' in de hospital an' when anybody come she would come out to talk to dem. She real,

real like me dat time when I had it. An' after I have it an' she come an' get a little older an' den she dead an' gone. An'' so after dat I leave dat work. An' after dat I use' to fret an' t'ing but I use to keep myself quiet. I said I didn' want no more chil'ren...I see too much of trouble...I use' to go outside an' work at other people. It was long time an' yuh didn' work for a lot of money yuh know. I use' to earn 9 shillin's a month. Not like now."

Lora went to live with her carpenter and cabinet maker 'friend' in Woodbrook after her employer died. She married in 1943 when she was 36 years old and her daughter was 16. She lived with him for 15 years, "But he like' his beers an' he have pressure....He get sick an' we take him in to de hospital an' he dead." The doctor had warned him about the dangers of drinking with his high blood pressure but men with old habits die with them. Lora still covers down the furniture that he made for her and speaks affectionately of the man and his skill.

"De first work I get, I get a little money was when I worked for de Americans... Dat was a nice lady." This was after the American oil companies began taking over from the British in the 50's and 60's. Mr. Johnson worked at Point-A-Pierre. "Dat was when I work for some Chinese people. Dey (The Americans) was rentin' de house from some Chinese people...Dey payin' me $175 a mont'! So I went from 9 shillin's! Well I worked dere about 15 years. De husband see about oil. An' after de work dey send dem back home an'..well after, I can' work wid ordinary people dat pay only $30 or $35. People's servants now work for more money an' some of dem get $100 a week...But dat time..."

There were cultural differences but they were handled in a different way. Besides, the American family made provision for Lora's different ways and the salary would have helped along with the perquisites. At the time, Lora was the only member of her household working as her daughter was home with two children and her son-in-law was looking for work. He would eventually emigrate to America. "Yuh see what use' to happen..dey use' to say if I would like to have my own food or eat wid dem, but I say, 'No. I will go down home an' eat my own food. Yeah, I could cook my own food.. Dey don' like stews, dey say it too salt an' dey don' like dat. Dey roast a little chicken an' dey roast de beef an' I don' like dey food. So I like to take up my little chicken an' put it in my pot. Mr. Johnson was very nice. He used to tell me, 'But you take so much rice.' I use' to say,'I could eat a whole pound of rice.' He say, 'Jesus Christ Lora is that right.' I say,'Yeahs'. But he use' to say,'But I don' want to eat dat salt fish..I don' want dat stinky salt fish.' I say,'I wont cook dat salt fish again.' Yeahs, he don' like to eat dat. He buy beef, de chicken an' de butter (golden ray) an' put it in modern fridge. An' he say, 'An when yuh want it yuh can have it, but I don' want dat salt fish.' So I use' to cook my little food for myself. She (Mrs Johnson) didn' mind, an' he use to come only in de afternoon late an' I already had it."

Lora was intrigued by the charmed life style of her American employer. "She use' to get up in de mornin' an' she go an' bathe an' squeeze juice an' put a little lime in it. An' she use' to smoke an' sit down to smoke... In de evenin' when she know he comin' den she start to cook. An' den in de night dey would sit down an' eat den. She was nice. She use' to wait on him. An' when I say 'all de work', dere wasn' so much of work yuh know. No big set of washin' or starchin' to beat out for Mr. Johnson wear a khaki pants an' shirt. She wanted somebody to stay dere wid her for she alone. He use' to go on a Tuesday an' come back of a Wednesday mornin'. An' I live jus' by Piccadilly Street, jus' dere."

After the Johnsons went back to the United States Lora "paid a little money" for a parlour in John John. "I had a little parlour dere by de sapodilla tree. I sell mauby, sweet bread, bread, coals. I use' to make it. An' everybody would come an' pass a little time. Egbert Compton would make his little jokes an' laugh." Now she boards a Portuguese family for Sunday lunch as the mother is suffering from some disease. During the week a young man comes for lunch. "His mother was a friend by me in John John. Well she did ask me to cook a little food for him as he work in insurance. Well yuh know he leavin' so fast so when he leave he can' go back so he come aroun' here for he food. He come an' pay me every Friday. It help my little pension. An' I have my great gran here. Sometimes I does feel tired yuh know, but most of de time I feel I could work all de time..when I work I does feel good."

Lora had only one daughter but she has reared her 5 grandchildren, her sister's children and some of her great grandchildren. Lora reared her grans while her daughter was getting settled in the States. "All five born into my hands yuh know." Lora also raised her sister's children and the niece is now working in a baker shop and brings home bread. "She nice boy. Big an' fat an' I see about dose chil'ren. She livin' on de sixth floor." Lora has surrounded herself with photographs of the adults who were once in her hands and she is still directly involved in the care of her great gran, Melissa (5 yrs) and the five children upstairs.

Lora's work has brought her into conflict with different people's values but now she has conflicts within her own family that are just as alienating. She would not find it at all strange for a woman to be estranged from the father of her children or for a child to be with the grandmother but for a woman to leave her husband and be completely independent is definitely peculiar and belongs to another social construct. "My grand daughter (a computer operator in the United States) live by her whole self, an' she spend all her money for herself. She married an' de man say how he would stay home seein' how she make a lot of money an' she went an' move into an' apartment for herself an' stay by herself. My daughter take de baby."

Another area of concern that Lora finds difficult to accept is that her only daughter is now working as a cook in the States after the hospital where she was working dismissed all foreign staff. "My daughter is not to cook. She can' cook!" And when I suggested that she would not need to know about cow heel soup and callaloo to cook for Americans and to be paid American wages, Lora remarks, "Yeahs, but when she come here she want nice callaloo and nice coucou. An' of a Sunday...crab back." No, Lora did not intend for her only child to be a cook and when she is home she is treated like royalty. All her grans "went to college an' have tickets an' t'ing." And her great gran Melissa (5 yrs), "She too fast man. She can read an' write for her own self. A bright little girl."

Lora has seen her family reaching goals that were never dreamt of in her time and she has been vital to their achievements. And all the cards and photographs tell Lora's story. But she has one regret, "I wish I had another daughter never married an' make her stay wid me. One chil' I have, whole life. She married an' she gone to de other side."

Vena (73 yrs) like Lora was also a housegirl as a child. "My mother put me with a lady. A white lookin' French an' Spanish but a real white woman. ...An' my mother leave me with her an' gone back home. ..Dey teach me what dey could of...All what I learned is from dem. Yes, I had to work hard but dey take care of me an' everyt'ing. I try, yuh know I try....My father use' to pass because dey were livin' plenty..up in de country (Maracas Valley), higher up from St Joseph ... (The H family) Dey were people dat have plenty properties an' deir own house an' everyt'ing. Dey were not hand t' mout' peoples an' dey use' to have servants... So

I was jus', yuh know, I was a chil' in de house an' I have to do somet'ing.. But I were not exactly a servant because she had me from my mother as a chil'. All de family had loved me. ... She was a seamstress, de lady, an' I use' to watch to see all what she doin'. She use' to knit. ...An' everyt'ing she do I watchin' so dat's how I get to learn. ... I learn to do everyt'ing from her. I like to have my mind actified yuh know...But I does make my own clothes yuh know.

My mistress was what yuh call a church-goin' lady an' organist in de church. An' everybody like me when I was a little girl, all de nuns an' de girls in de convent. Dey use' to tell me 'run away an' come an' stay wid us.'...But yuh know I never had dat intention because it is so near dat if I run away she would see me...Dey couldn' hide me in a corner...an' when I run away I must get my clothes to carry an' all dose t'ings. I never had to bother wid all does t'ings 'cause yuh see what happen, she never use' to send me to school[80] .... All she want is for me to work, work, work... Everyt'ing she do..Vena, Vena, Vena.. Now all of dem dead an' I still alive! As I was not of my own, I could not do what de girls wanted me to do or I would have been in trouble...An' every little mistake yuh make dey did like to beat yuh an', dey like licks."

Like Lora's Anglican lady, the one thing that brought Vena's Catholic m[illegible] into conflict with her 'schoolgirl' was their different attitudes to sexuality. Vena ran away from her mistress when she was 14 years old, so this happens before she makes good her escape. One young man wanted to 'ask for' Vena but she had to explain. "I say, 'listen I don' want my lady to see me talkin' to you because dey goin' to beat meh. He say, 'no, I am goin' to ask for you.' I said, 'No, no, no, no, no...dey are goin' to beat meh, dey goin' to beat meh because dey ain' so accustom' to boys. He was one happy lookin' chap..from Arima. He was good lookin' an' I was afraid. Yes, I didn' accept him an' as a chil' dey don' want to hear about man, dey want to hear nothin' about man an' dis an' dat an' so I don' know how dey did get deir own but dey didn' want you to... Yes. So when yuh are little yuh have little sense. The sense I have now if I had when I was young, I would be plenty allright now....I could have married, I could have go to Venezuela but no, I never."

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[80] In 1911 47% of population illiterate. In 1946 26% were illiterate. In 1970 6% were illiterate. CSO Population by Literacy 1977.

Vena is ashamed of those things that mark her as poor and ignorant. Her identification card has her smudged thumb print instead of her signature and "de girl made me put it bad. Yuh see dey did not send me to school... Yuh see, when yuh grow up widout your parents an' so on..." She had no wish to "shame" her mother by running away from Mrs.H as her mother had brought her there and believed that Vena would be well placed there. When her mother died Vena fled. "I went round lookin' for work all about. I work, where I work, I stay. Long ago it seems to have a lot of people glad for some girl to work wid dem an' stay wid dem an' so on. I had to work for m'self since I was fourteen. I make m'self a woman a long long time, takin' care of my own self. So yuh have to fight to do for yourself. But when yuh God's Chil' He doesn' let yuh fall yuh know. An' I have plenty, plenty courage. Yes, I use' to do cookin'..I could wash, starch, iron... I use' to do plenty hirements...sometimes 2 or 3 houses[81]..until time came for me to apply for my pension an' I applied... At dat time dey does have a lot of turnin' an' twistin' before you could get dat."[82]

Vena eventually got through with the pension application but her case was not straightforward. "When dey catch yuh lyin' yuh know what happen, dey make you shame an' I don' like dat.. I feel bad for in case it is somet'ing yuh buyin' dey make yuh lose it. ..An' sometimes when yuh t'ink yuh allright a next one (civil servant) does come....When I t'ink I was allright a next lady come an' de place where I was livin' was ol', ol', ol'.... When I tell de lady to come in here she say, 'No. I seen de place already.' She stayed outside because it was just as if I was in a box. Inside dere use' to be hot, beads of perspiration runnin' down..oui, oui...anyway, God help." The John John fire destroyed everything that Vena possessed. Now Vena is living in the pensioners quarters with her 'inside toilet an' pipe' and she has a garden in drums that she attends to. She gets the pension, a little 'help' from Servol, and every month the family of the boy she reared sends a 'little help'. And her 'outside' sister also offers 'assistance'.

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[81] Among domestic employees a strategy of appropriating your own time and being in a better position to bargain is to work as a laundress so that you have set times and you can pull in more money because the wages for time is higher than for a regular domestic full time. The nature of the relationship between employer and employee is also a closer approximation to a business arrangement. Refer to Miss Elizabeth.

[82] Vena's 2 identification cards had 2 separate birth dates on them so the 'turnin' an' twistin'' may have been a result of this local scam. Edgar Compton said he could put people in touch with a fellow who could "fix papers for pension" if could make it worth his trouble.

Mistress Mary (69 yrs) came from Grenada in "Cipriani time" to Fyzabad. In Grenada she helped her mother in her garden, and laboured in the field for other people as well. "I was more thin then but slight people not weak people.. De almighty God know if yuh big yuh ain' have no strength. He full up de bones wid strength an' give us de knowledge an' de acts so yuh would be able to pick up dat. So when I was young eh, if yuh see what I use' to do. Yuh wouldn' know I was a woman, no! I work in de garden plantin', weedin', an' t'ing." "Dey use' to tell me I wouldn' make chil'ren for I love chil'ren too much. An' when I start to make 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...every year." Miss Mary made 6 children but "De good Lord take t'ree". She took in a little work cooking and washing but things were hard, so "seein' dat de father dead, de mother dead, an' me ain' have nobody an' makin' chil'ren every year" she followed her cousin to the oil fields of Fyzabad.

After a period of adjustment Miss Mary moved to Barataria and put her children with a cousin there. "An' I came to get a work wid dis woman I was tellin' yuh about. It was servant work an' I work dere an' I work an' work an' work. I worked down St James an' I work' in San Juan with a Indian, a dougla...Yuh know Trinidad have all different people. An' I use to do a little work for m'self sellin' an' I leave dere an' I start sellin'. ...Well, all about dat George Street Market I use' to sell in de night. Day an' night. An' I work hard. Some was inside an' when dey close up we go outside an' sell. Since den I go home an' sleep...I eat an' wash at four in de mornin'. I did sell everyt'ing...Fruit, provision, everyt'ing, anyt'ing that I find to sell. Sell ripe fig, mango anyt'ing dat was fruits."

Mistress Mary's main source of income was from the art of healing. "My family was herb an' bush medicine an' dis midwife business." While I was talking to Mistress Mary there were several interruptions as people came with various complaints and she attended to them with prayers, lotions and bush tea. "Yeahs...I don' speak while I am attendin' to anybody...I does be prayin'. But some of dem does get me vex an' so I does get dem to de hospital. Dey say, come on mama yuh know yuh can' do me dat. I say go to hospital man.. Dere is some people dat does go an' take deir chil'ren from hospital an' bring dem to meh here.... Lord, dey say dat when I dead dey don' know what dey goin' to do. Yuh see dat man what was here (paying off his little trust) he don' know what he would do. He father too. I attend to all dese people, dey all know meh. Parents, chil'ren, woman for dey womb. ... Well yuh see, I's a Baptist...I went an' baptize an' I get my gift from God."

Miss Mary married later in life to the cleaner at Besson Street Police Station. She was widowed 2 years when I spoke with her. However, she was still selling provision from her doorway and performing her healing role. She chuckles and says, "when I set up my little table everybody will come. I'm a real salt fish, yeahs..everybody will pass an' say 'Miss Mary', little chil'ren, big people.. Everybody like my house." So Miss Mary's work has kept her active and whenever I passed by I would join those sitting on her doorstep. It was not hard to understand that this old woman was a very powerful figure in the community and when she stood erect she was close to 6 feet tall even in her advanced years.

Gwen (48 yrs) also had a Baptist mother who used to sell in the market. Her mother use to sell "mango, black puddin', she sell souse, roast corn, .. she sell gru gru, and she use' to sell provision, green fig, sweet potato, plantain, dasheen, bush.. I never use' to sell. I always use' to be send...go to garden wid she an' pick up gru gru and zavoca and get it for her to go an' sell by de market. ...Yeah, we had a big garden and we ha' a zavoca tree and a mango tree dere...plenty mangoes: julie, mango verre and sou sou matelle. My father use' to sell and he use' to push box cart and work in the slaughtery selling black puddin' and carry to market." Gwen's family was involved in this vending operation which gathered in local produce and catered to the Creole diet.

Gwen did not spend much time at school as she was engaged in the family venture. From Picton Hill, Laventille she moved with her mother to Shantytown and then they were moved into the Beetham and Gwen went to Phillip St School. "I use' to go on an' off, on an' off...l really ain' get plenty schoolin' t' say well I get plenty an' I up t' date an' t'ing. I read an' write a little bit, but not too much." In fact, Gwen is functionally illiterate and is convinced that she does not have one of "dem quick brains". Gwen has not spent much time in the paid labour force as she has been located in the home caring for her father. After her mother died she lived with her sister. "My sister come an' she take me an' she married me. She married me an' I was to stay wid m' sister to grow up big an' den I leave to go by m' father." Gwen had born 2 children by the time she was 16 years old but both children died. "They live...de little girl catch pneumonia. She was about 2 years. But de little boy was dead a year, he fall down. Well after, I was livin' wid my father. He sick a long time. Ol' age nuh. But not ailin' yuh know, jus' lyin' down sick from ol' age. .. Well, before ten days I was right home wid m' father all de time. He was a very old man right. I use' to stay right by his place because he was a ol' man an' he use' to get pension. He use' to get $60 a month and out o' dat $60 yuh could pay rent an' buy message out o' it an' I use' to stay, make porridge, wash bathe him, clean him an' t'ing until after when he come an' he died...After de burial an' everyt'ing I use' 'to be dere by meself an' my little girl (her adopted epileptic daughter)... I really didn' have nobody at all."

So Gwen gets in with an older man, a Pentecostal carpenter and cabinet maker from Grenada. They married in 1981. Gwen has adopted 3 children. Her 16 year old son is actually her husband's grandson. She gets a little assistance from the Red Cross and the Government for the epileptic child but has to support the others. Her second son's father was burnt badly in the 1978 fire in John John so Gwen took over the child. She does not want to ask the parents for any assistance with this last child for fear that they might want to take the child over again. To support her family she takes in washing for a bachelor and is paid by the weight. And she takes a 'ten days' whenever she can 'get through'. "I couldn' get since last year. I work a ten days an' still ain' get up to now. If yuh see de letters I have home. I tired of writin' to de Prime Minister to ask him if he could help meh with a little ten days... George Chambers, I tired of write to he. Well I have letters in all dem Williams days." It was not unusual to learn that women wrote (had someone write) to the Prime Minister to ask for work. Gwen blames the corruption in the Department of Environmental Works Division for her plight. " Dey scratch out yuh name and give de younger girls. Yuh know dem men down dere. Yuh t'ink dey lookin' at I? De younger girls get all de work."

Times are hard for Gwen's husband. "He is a carpenter by trade. An' well.. He does get a .. like a kind of a labourer, but now he does do a little pass time for t'ings aren't as bright as before. So he does get a little private job now an' den." His (grand)son also wants to be a carpenter "but his father don' like carpenter for I don' know how dey will make out. He' father want him to do a technician." After hustling for work over many years there is still no permanent position or security for Gwen's husband. "Well, when he ain' workin' he doesn' get no money because he ain' workin' wid de government yuh know, with a private firm. I don' t'ink he in a union, nuh, he isn' in a union." And Gwen's husband's name is also left off the list for unemployment relief work.

To help out with the household finances, Gwen "carries" or has her son carry a blind pensioner to do her shopping and to attend her church for a "little five dollar". When she goes to market she passes by vendors who know her family well from the days when her parents were vendors themselves. She "knows people" which means that she can get things at reduced rates or free if she goes at the right time. However, as Gwen is very advanced in her post at her church she helps out with various rites which takes a significant amount of time. It is customary for those who are preparing for baptism or who are on the mourning tract to make provision for church functionaries who eat while they themselves fast as part of their cleansing and purification rites. Gwen herself fasts regularly in her efforts to please God and cure her high blood pressure and 'nerves'. Prayers and fasting take up a lot of time on a regular basis and so where there is scant income the restricted diet of necessity is transformed into an act of devotion for her personal health and spiritual well-being.

Many of the women who spent some time at school or who were housegirls in middle class homes were taught skills for entering the seamstress trade. Vena (74 yrs), Ruth (50 yrs), Francine (46 yrs), Mena and Tara (31 yrs & 26 yrs) and Aida (17 yrs) have all had some experience as seamstresses. Aida is currently doing the trade course at SERVOL, a branch of the Roman Catholic Church located on the grounds of the Beetham Housing Estate. She refers to her course as 'Garment Construction' as distinct from dressmaking or becoming a seamstress. Mena and Tara were taught their skills at Holy Name Convent. Francine was sent to live with her aunt[83] in St Clair and attended a school in Chancery Lane and finished at St Joseph's Catholic School in Belmont. She did dress making at school and taught a class there but "I jus' find little chil'ren too miserable."

Ruth (50 yrs) went to Phillip Street Primary and then her parents paid for her to attend Hudson River High School. However, Ruth says that she learnt her trade by doing it. "When I was smaller I liked sewin' an' I start cuttin' an' yuh know, sewin' an' so...an' I get very good. I never go an' learn to sew. But is long time now. I have a lot of clothes dere to sew an' I really doesn' charge dem so dear, eh. It all depends on de material, de style, yuh know. De most I charge for a dress is about $25. ..But if I sit down to sew for de day I sew four dresses widout gettin' up. I don' take long...I does sew twice yuh see.. I cut my work at nights eh, so when I get up I just start sewin'. But I have to get up to see about lunch an' t'ing an' it does keep me back." So Ruth has learnt her craft through experience. Her schooling is reflected in her manner and style of approaching her work and the way she caters to her children as well as the way she conducts herself.

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[83] This "aunt" is her paternal grandfather's sister who takes Francine from Success Village Laventille to live in St Clair

Ruth takes a certain pride in her own competence for home management. Her six children (23 yrs to 12 yrs) do not do a thing in the house. She has given them the clothes, secondary education and the lifestyle befitting middle class householders even though she is living in John John. The man she is with now is an Indian policeman who was spending his vacation helping on his family's land in Couva. Ruth's last daughter who has just "passed for Holy Name" is for him. "My firs' five chil'ren dat I had de father different for dem but yuh see he get sick" (In fact, he made attempts to murder Ruth and was placed in the psychiatric hospital.) This family invests all their hopes for social mobility in education, involvement in sporting teams and playing pan. What the pan playing does, apart from providing musical skills and membership to a prized group of performers, is to give members of the family vacations in the United States each year.

Ruth encouraged her daughter to play pan. However, her daughter had a baby that was not planned, "t'rough a little fella push her on yuh know how it is?...Dese days it have chil'ren makin' chil'ren aroun' ten an' eleven!" Now Ruth is making it quite clear that the baby is her responsibility, her gran, and the daughter is getting a very strong message to pick up the threads of her own aspirations and go out to work to look after herself and the child. The money spent on this daughter's education was not meant to go idle but to give sound economic returns.

The house where Ruth lives has been bought from her mother by the government so she is able to live rent free and save while she is waiting for a place. There are many like Ruth who have moved into the area for the expressed purpose of getting a place to live when the government moves in to develop the area. "Yuh see dey have to give we a house so dat is why we haven' moved from here as yet. ..We settlin' here until we ready because yuh see houses aren' so easy to get dese days... But if Government give yuh a house den yuh don' have to pay so much for rent for it an' dey have everyt'ing inside de house.. Well, when I say everyt'ing, yuh gettin' toilet, bath, everyt'ing inside an' so yuh just have to move in. But yuh see dey wont be ready for years yet. But..No big fuss." And while Ruth is without "inside toilet and bath" she goes on to point out that everyone of her daughters has her own bed. Her two big sons have moved out. (So only 8 of us remain.)

Ruth's sewing is a mainstay of household income at the moment. "Yeahs, I only have one (son) workin' paid. Dis one here use to work down Carenage but de work close down. De black skin one use to work in a little place but he leave de work...Yuh know, so dey just home. ..Dem does buy dey own clothes. I does only give dem food yes...An' it's not easy. Everybody puttin' people off. It ain' so hard as yet. I don' know for later on."

For Ruth styles of coping are built into her routine like the generations before her. Her family is something of an anomaly in John John. Ruth's father earned his living by supplying wood for the bakeries of Port-of-Spain. He contracted labour and paid them each week. He was East Indian and other residents remembered how he continued to wear a dhoti which would have been very unusual in John John then. Egbert said he was a pandit (pundit) and that he worked in his garden as well as taking his small pirrogue fishing in the gulf. When I asked Ruth if her mother worked she said, "No...Well she stay home sellin' provision an' t'ing nuh...Dere were 15 of us my mother made. 10 alive.. She sew all de clothes for us but she wasn' a seamstress." Her mother is still alive. "An' my mother's 80 years. But she live' up Erica Street in Laventille. She livin' by herself but she have a brother come from New York livin' wid her right now. De onliest t'ing... her eyes givin' a little trouble now an' she goin' in for operation next month (to remove the cataracts). An' she does suffer not from pressure but from sugar."

Tara and Mena are also seamstresses and remarked that they felt that they were better off for having a trade as they can use their trade "for family to stay together". "Our mother jus' work. If she could sell, she would sell sometimes to make a livin'. She had no special trade like to say right.. like my sewin'. She just have to make a livin' in whatever way she could." Mena and Tara's mother had 10 children living at home. "Well, I t'ink she use' to sell roti an' t'ing an' I t'ink dat is what caused her to get de heat yuh know. She was big an' she had pressure. .. An' she use' to do housework. M' father always work as a watchman but not regular. Well now he work regular but not a whole day like

Port, he only workin' on a Sunday right now an' on a holiday he would work. Sometimes he will get a fortnight, a full fortnight."

At the moment there are three seamstresses living in the household and so there is always someone on the machine doing piecework even after Tara and her friend get in from working all day. They sew for a private subcontractor to supply a baby-wear boutique. Being a seamstress is considered to be a step above 'servant work' and unskilled work but as we can see from talking to these women, it is hard to get by on the wages. I asked them if they could manage to save money and this was Tara's reply, "What! Yuh mean to save money? Oh no, I get along but I never get out of it to say, stand back.. To earn that little extra is a hard time. So I have to put whatever little I had.. but I end up usin' it. Now I 'saved'[84] I know t'ings are so much better an' I will save. I change'."

Tara has had 6 different places of employment that she is willing to recall. But now she is going to be working again with her friend. They met in Holy Name Convent. This same friend introduced her to the Pentecostal Church and this job is being arranged through the church's informal network. The job promises to be better than the one that she now has in Diego Martin, "Too true. Yeahs, because by Saturday I's flat broke. Because on Saturday I pass through (Port-of-Spain) because I say, 'My Lord, I got not'ing.' Yuh know, I just have to get a better job. I'll just hold on until I hear...It's a sure t'ing dat I will get but I just have to wait for it."

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[84] These women are Pentecostal converts and consider themselves among the chosen who will enter the Kingdom of God. They have been 'saved' from eternal damnation.

At the moment this household is very poor. They have shut off their electricity except to power the machine to economize. Cooking is done in a coal pot and pitch oil primus which has the whole place dusted in black soot (while the precious baby clothes for the boutique are covered down with paper and plastic.)

As I was talking to Tara, Mena was embroidering little roses and blue birds carrying pink and blue ribbons over the intricate smocking on a baby's night gown. Their own little children were crying and coughing while dressed in grubby vests or panties. They were sick with the measles while their mothers were bent over their work as they know they must. The children stood their distance from the precious baby's garment like a sad statement of social reality where these little clothes with romantic insignias embroidered into the fabric were never meant for the children of the women who made them.

These women understood that they had to fend for themselves. When fathers are not on time or not able to lend support for their children (which is quite often) "Daddy helps an' a brother does help." However, what these women are saying is that the money they get is quite inadequate. "Well it just enough to maintain life."

To ask for more money from any quarter is to invite quarrels and now that they are 'saved' all their 'sinfulness' has been set aside. "I myself did not stop quarrellin'. I use' to steal cigarettes an' all dat, an' I use' to go to parties...I find dat startin' to wear off...I became more light." Indeed, since they have been 'saved' they have entered a new set of social relations and if the informal network of gaining a government job through contacts in the church materializes then it might well be transforming for these women whose special skills have not been appreciated in the wages they have received for their labours to date.

One of the younger women I talked with intends to use 'garment construction' as a stepping stone to a white collar secretarial position. Aida is 17 years old and entering trade school at SERVOL on the Beetham Housing complex. At this stage her family is unable to support the fees for her secretarial course. "At de school in town, if yuh takin' subjec's $30 for one accordin' to how much. Like de sec'etarial course in Typin', Short Han' an' maybe English...so it would be $70 a month".[85] So Aida intends to do garment construction at home while she goes to school. There has been a problem with the course however, "dey want to close down de garment class but de teacher still tryin' wid de chil'ren an' dem....Dey say garment aren' important. Like dey prefer to learn yuh cookin' or somet'ing else. But I find garment important for yuh have to dress an' look nice...Yeah. De clothes an' dem in de store really dear so if I could make my own t'ing I don' ;have to go an' pay $200 an' $500 for a dress."

Aida is the only one from her friendship network taking garment construction. Some of her friends are doing the secretarial course while others have children and others aren't working yet. At the present time Aida is determined to put her career before all else as she is under considerable pressure to fend for herself financially as her father is about to have another child and he is adding on to his house. Over recent months there have been heated scenes about 'keeping' Aida. Her mother has 3 other children so Aida has planned a course of action with the eventual aim of becoming a government secretary. She needs an income immediately. "I went to de Hilton an' I check out a job an' de lady tell me to come back the endin' of dis month to check dem. She say dey might have a vacancy by dat time. .. M' grandfather an' another fella still workin' dere but he still goin' to school. He use' to work dere of a evenin' but he would go an' lime an' thing so he lose de work. But I want it an' I can' get." Like so many young people, Aida is bent on gaining employment and so it seems incredible that her school friend would get fired for 'liming' while she is desperate for work.

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[85] $70 is not a multiple of 3x$30. But this was Aida's information.

Aida has been baptized Spiritual Baptist recently and so she is using that network. Her grandfather is also a Baptist and worked for PNM in the last elections so he may be able to use his influence. But, Aida's father and her grandfather are feuding over several contentious matters. But John Lang is keeping a close watch, "my grandfather was sayin' how dey were takin' on some people so I went an' check dem but...dey don' have no more." Aida has filled out the forms but she knows that it is important to hustle until she gets through or else she will be passed over by others who are more vigilant. It is very important to have connections[86] such as kinship ties or godparents in well placed areas when looking for work. A little bribery is not uncommon and in many cases it is understood.

Aida's mother is a regular at Special Works and her grandmother cares for the younger children. So while Aida is home she sews, cleans, cooks, does the washing and generally keeps busy while she goes to trade school. At this stage Aida wants a night job to secure some independence until she can put her garment construction to work to gain an income. "If yuh sewin' for yuhself accordin' to what price yuh tell de people. If yuh workin' in a factory you're paid by de week...If yuh is a seamstress, right, dey pay yuh two hundred somet'ing but if yuh aren' a seamstress an' yuh jus' stitchin' or cut or somet'ing den yuh don' get as much."

Aida is very conscious of the trouble that some of her friends are going through right now and is keen to keep on the straight and narrow. "Some of dem gettin' trouble...Father trouble." It is humiliating for her friends when the paternity of their children is rebuffed by denial from the fathers and the woman is then put in a position of having to prove paternity. The onus here is on the young mother. The shortcomings of the law for women are such that paternity can be denied without any great fear of their being prosecuted or penalized for abandoning responsibility. Even when paternity is acknowledged the young mother sees little in the way of regular support. "Some girls livin' wid de chil'ren's father an' some of dem livin' wid deir mother an' dat does be always hard." Aida does not elaborate here but it is understood that the price paid for having children into a mother's hands is that a bind is set into place for the young woman to be dependent or answerable to her mother. The daughter, unlike the son, cannot be irregular about support coming in.

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[86] The other way of 'having connection' is equally true for young girls looking for work. Among this class of women, and beyond, it is understood that pressure for sexual liaisons is part of the bargaining strategy for securing employment in a fiercely competitive market.

Aida was much more relaxed about discussing the positions of her friends in a search for her own way in the world of economic viability. She has watched the trouble experienced by friends who have babies and are now finding it difficult to get ready support and she has concluded that she is not going to have children until she has her own home and her own money. This is a tall order in the Beetham and John John and not readily obtainable for young women. In fact, after talking to older women it seemed like an impossible fantasy for Aida to make a statement that did not include having babies within a year or two. What Aida proposes is not outside possibility in theory, as walk-in family planning clinics give free advice and protection, and many women are defying their elders and lovers by taking contraceptive measures. Aida has a brave plan for her own independence and personhood cloaked by her reserved temperament and an habitual show of deference to a grandmother (who still wears a belt that has no esthetic purpose). Just what will happen is constantly negotiated in the process of pushing ahead. All the while, Aida is gaining an intimate knowledge of the ways others are experiencing their world and she is learning the time honoured skills for surviving in this very oppressive complex of human relations.

Denise Ellis (34 yrs) is a Rastafarian woman who has tried her hand at whatever opportunities she has been able to grasp along the way. She has three children ranging in age from 21 years to 14 years and four grandchildren.[87] She grew up with her mother's family and went to primary school in Talparo. Her first daughter was born when she was 12 years old. So she made the transition from childhood to motherhood when she was still at school (although her memory for when it was that she finished school is not at all clear). She came to live with her mother in San Juan when her second child was born and she was looking for work. Her children remained with her mother's family in Talparo and Denise makes it clear that she has not achieved as a self styled person but as a resourceful member of her family. "If it wasn' for dem... well no success, right? Because one hand can' clap right? An' if yuh have to do somet'ing an' yuh have kids... Well yuh look for help wid your kids for you to go out, right? So yuh have to say well they were a help too. Oh yeah, they were helpful. I have t' say dat any achievement dat I make dey is part o' it. Yeahs.. I get help. I does have a brave kin' o' force in me. If I say I goin' here then I go an' nothing' can' stop me. An' I will jus' get up an' go an' do it."

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[87] Denise's 21 year old daughter has 3 children and her 17 year old daughter has a child. Her oldest daughter is still with family in Talparo. The others are with her mother 'up home' in Morvant.

Denise married the father of her children at the same time that they were drawn to Rastafarianism.[88] Denise explained the practical economic considerations that had to be respected, "I married 7 years now. Can' afford marriage an' everyt'ing at one time. Yuh have t' take everyt'ing as it steps." For Denise the Rastafarian "grows her hair to how she feels" and has pride in her African descent but she articulates her belief structure more in what she does and in explaining how she gets ahead. She does not alter her diet or reject society and all the evils of capitalism, or Babylon. In fact she would hardly be recognized as a Rasta.

Denise makes it a point to stress respect for the lives of poor people, especially poor black women. She affirms, "This is life too! Yuh got t' fight for it eh. Yuh got to fight yuh fate real hard... Yuh got t' work hard t' get what yuh want. Yuh have t' hustle. Yuh have t' make life. Life is hard an' yuh jus' can' sit down an' some does seems to want t' sit slow an' get everyt'ing an' it not so...yuh never get! Yuh have t' get up an' hustle. ..I always workin' an' I always hustlin'."

Denise started working as a domestic servant and went to Venezuela to work for people there as she could not see her way ahead in Trinidad. "Dey have a lot of domestic work in outside countries..It have work. It is workin' yuh know! Yuh have t' know how t' really move an' adjust your situation so yuh wouldn' get advantage. Yuh have t' be smart yuh know. Yuh can' jus' sit down an' take everyt'ing. Yuh have to stand up too for yuh rights. .. It have a lot o' slave mentality here yuh know. All about even in de United States an' all. Yuh fin' dey does treat yuh so bad because dey know yuh don' have citizenship an' all. Dey abuse yuh, right. All about even in outside countries dey use dat mentality to hold yuh...especially Caracas, Venezuela. I stay dere an' live dere a year an' six mont's. I have it nice dere.. Yuh got t' know t' fight back. Yeah, dey have yuh real slave, real dog. Dey want yuh t' work but dey don' want to pay when yuh on salary an' all dis t'ing. When yuh work wid dem dey only givin' yuh food, dat is all. An' when time to pay, no pay.. Dey don' want t' pay yuh.... But I know dey couldn' do me not'ing all dey could do is to send me back home. I went on my own an' get a job on my own..an' I know dat immigration. I know I comin' straight back home so I don' care not'ing. An' I use' to work an' dey use' to pay me. A year an' six mont's I stayed dere an' den I come home because dey have a shortage here wid food... Yeah, it had a shortage of food in Trinidad, yuh couldn' get rice, yuh couldn' get milk, yuh know an' where I was it had so much o' food...an' if yuh only send it dey t'ief it. Yuh had to come." And while Denise was there she had to speak in spanish. "Yuh see, as long as yuh hearin' it an' sayin' it again yuh will get yuh way aroun'... Yuh will make it. Yuh will get anywhere, anywhere (and she rubs her fingers to imply that the universal language is money.. money speaks)" . This woman is a shrewd businesswoman and from what she says it would seem that she invented 'aim rational' behaviour or that ability to use knowledge and any resources available to 'get through'.

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[88] The Rastafarian refers to his wife or woman as his 'queen' which was a term that was used mainly by men to describe their mothers in the past.

Denise insists that she likes to keep on the move. "Right, yeah, I does move man. I sell clothes, I sell house appliances, everyt'ing yuh know. I try everyt'ing dat could make a shillin'. I is not t' t'ief an' I is not t' beg."[89] This statement might appear to set limits on Denise's creative potential for hustling her way but she says nothing about abiding by the laws of the nation only that she believes in Rastafari and she will do what is necessary to get what she sets out to get.

Denise went through the motions of hustling for 'ten days' but this did not suit her. "Well, yuh see now yuh have t' look for somet'ing on your own, right? Yuh build a little place and chook yuh head an look for a dollar elsewhere because it really hard to get a ten days... Yeahs for a few years dis is what I livin' on. I ain' decide to go an' work anywhere for nobody. I tired! .. I like to take risks. Yeahs, an' if I get t'rough I get t'rough. If I ain' get t'rough I jus' try somet'ing else...I am a real tryer...an' sometimes I so successful eh. Yeah, I don' ever sit down. I have a brave kin' of mentality. I get up an' I have to get up...Before I ever got converted I was dat kin' of person."

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[89] "I call upon the Lord - Holy herb of wisdom. Peace and love me Brother. We do not beg, we do not steal, we depend upon the grace of Rastafari for livelihood we know that he will look after his own and most of all, that the holy weed..." Orlando Patterson. Children of Sisyphus p.51.

Denise was one of the only women I spoke with who had managed to save money or accumulate capital and so I asked if she had taken out a loan to set up her parlour. "No loan. I build on workin' money an' save. I put a little piece, a little piece until how it is here... I put on de front, an' den another room an' den dis las' room... Nobody to pay back.. Yuh see I can' afford goin' aroun' borrowin' money an' notice I can' pay back, right. So it didn' make sense in really borrowin' no big set o' money here dere an' everywhere. An' when yuh can' really pay back it don' make sense. Instead of really pullin' in." So Denise favours 'pullin' in' from in front rather than 'payin' back' from behind. "I use de pawn shop but very rare. Not for not'ing important. Like if yuh need $20 to do somet'ing an' yuh have a chain or a ring or so...yuh really make it up wid it, yuh know." So the pawn shop is for 'make up' money not for anything big. She also used to run sousou. "Well I run dat to really make life. Dat is part of life... I get in a lot of sousous." Running sousous is common but many other women talked about the headaches they were to run. Denise says that she did not have problems, "anyt'ing I do I start firm. I like dat towards everyt'ing...is de way yuh keep wid people. Yuh don' really deal wid people eh. Yuh not hog stylish, yuh know yuh are close to a person an' so yuh get t'rough... But I jus' leave it as it too much o' hustlin'..when yuh always have to be on time an' date an' yuh know yuh have other business. At a time I jus' get fed up an' I jus' start out on somet'ing else...I like movin' aroun'."

Denise and her husband have Rasta Parlours in the Beetham that the police are threatening to close down. There have been several raids and only recently another fine of $2000 was imposed on her husband[90] for possession of marijuana, the holy herb and weed of wisdom for Rastas. The fines have forced them to be more unscrupulous in certain matters but the nightly rituals of smoking weed have not diminished and the pensioners here do not venture out at night for fear of the Rastas. As Denise is talking to me she notices that her cousin from Grenada is about to head out for 'bread' for the parlour and she says, "Max.. Yuh mustn' go in de bakery wid dat. When yuh comin' down do road de police could stop yuh, yuh know an' see dat it is bread but it aren' really." And Max replies, "What shirt to put on boy...It have a shirt I put on dis mornin'. Jus' somet'ing cheap right, right..". And he takes off the crisp new mock army battle fatigues that would draw attention and puts on an old shirt and pants more befitting a bread boy. So Denise is very aware of strategic poverty to disguise a carrier of the illicit cargo and we realize that as a Rasta with dread locks covered down with her headtie she has found another way to fight her fate real hard.[91]

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[90] Denise's husband is well known to the police for all manner of criminal offences including murder but he was not charged through lack of witnesses willing to come forward to give evidence. Edgar Compton says that nobody would speak but nobody forgets. Police is not for justice around here.

[91] Denise said that Rastafarianism was a religion that found her the way she was, the way she had always been. It was a religion *for* her. However, it would seem that she has created Rastafarianism in her own image and profits on this counter culture. For the Rasta, to deal in marijuana is consistent with an attitude of defiance to a Eurocentric society and the drug is believed to enhance and guide the spiritual

Fiona (38 yrs) and Marion (45 yrs) have both moved from low status domestic employment positions into factory work where conditions are marginally better. Marion explained that Trinidad housewives are "too kind of roughish. Dey have yuh goin' de whole day an' yuh don' get to sit down at all." In the factory the women are paid by the volume of work they do so the wages are low at first. Marion explained, "I use' to make grapefruit sections. Dey uses to give us 4 cents a dozen. I use to get $20 for de week until I pick up wid de work an' t'ing an' den Yuh know, $40-$50 accordin' to how we work. An' den we get a new rate of 5 cents a dozen. Dat time I use' to clear $100 a week. dat was when it was good. Dat was $80 to $100 a week accordin'. Well if de plant still open, I would be workin' for good money now."[92]

Fiona has an epileptic son so her wages of $150 a week are supplemented by government assistance of "$20 or somet'ing for a month." Up until her mother died Tommy (16 yrs) and another grand daughter were cared for by their grandmother. Now Fiona is head of the household. She still goes out to work in a fan factory in St James while her brother carries on a tailoring business from

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powers of Jah love. Jah love and ganga smoking signifies religious committment for the Rasta in the same way as spirit possession and communion services signifies profound beliefs in cosmic orders for Denise's neighbours. Her philosophy is not far removed from her Spiritual Baptist and Shango sisters as we will note in the chapter on women and their religions. However, it is not permitted to smoke marijuana under Trinidad law and so when the law sweeps through and imposes fines and gaol terms on believers a new wave of religious persecution is witnessed by Rastafarians.

[92] If 5c-12 grapefruit; $5-1200 grapefruit; $10-2400 grapefruit; $100-24000 grapefuit!

her house in the Beetham. Fiona's brother is not altogether reliable in his work habits. "He is a curse, yes! Today he here, tomorrow he ain' here...Look, yesterday he was here but he ain' sew. He was to come today but he not here. But he come for I see he made some tea. But he gone an' we ain' see him again." Fiona's brother is having trouble of his own. "He married an' he livin' down de back street. Yuh hear last time what he do to de girl (wife). He chop de girl wid a cutlass an' de girl is now in hospital.. Well, he want her to go by Molly de mother." So Fiona's brother is having his own problems trying to get his wife to go back to her mother so that a next woman can move in. So he is not studying Tommy there alone with the machine or the customers calling for their orders.

The problem for Fiona is that she is concerned for her son and wants someone to be in the home with him when she is not there. Tommy is on anticonvulsant medication to help control his epilepsy but he still has seizures and needs to be carefully monitored. Fiona's younger sister is a prostitute and was sometimes home during the day to help her mother with her own child and Tommy but she is drug dependent and has a history of mental illness. "She comes an' goes back (to St Ann's Psychiatric Hospital). She de youngest an' she have one girl. She (the little girl) in SanFernando. When my mother died her sister take her." So Fiona's work is essential for the family purse. She has a visiting union and says that she prefers this arrangement where her friend still belongs to his mother's household even though he spends time with Fiona and that is always worth something.

Fiona's daily routine includes getting up at 4:00 in the morning to prepare for Tommy and to go out to work so that she could be home between 1:00 and 3:00 depending on whether there is a breakdown to hold the work back. Fiona is not unhappy with the salary of $150 a week, "Well as far as what I hear from de girls before me, we does do well". However, she concedes that it does not go very far. "Yuh see now is $3 I pay tax an' transportation and den dere is gorceries an' market." She laughs and says that it is not a living really but it does pay better than domestic work and she prefers this work where she can "chat" with the other women.

Marion, like most other women has turned her hand to any job that she could get over the years, but she preferred to work in places where she had other women to talk to. At 45 years of age she is now looking after her grandchildren and her youngest children. She made her first child in Grenada and has had 3 more sets of children since she arrived in Trinidad. At this stage she prefers to run her own household as she has had endless trouble with men drinking out her money while she works all week and then takes in washing and ironing of a Sunday. Now she has left the last factory job with Citrus Growers since they closed down her section and has gone in with her sister who is a vendor in the central market. Marion had managed to work fast enough to get $400 a month sectioning grapefruit but now she will be with the children until School vacation is through and she can go back to work with her sister in central market. "There is a holiday on Monday, I go out de Tuesday. I ain' goin' to do not'ing heavy yuh know, jus' keep it light. I gettin $230 a week. My sister sell in de market food an' t'ing. Tea, an' bread, smoke herrin', bojole, ham, all different t'ing...Fish, salt fish, fried bake, sweet bread."

The thing that Marion likes about working in the factory or the central market apart from the money is that it brings her into contact with other people. "Plenty friends, plenty friends. I have a lot of friends in de market too, for when yuh see I was in hospital...everyday people use' to come an' see me an' bring in milk an' juice an' dis an' dat. I had plenty visitors. An' everybody askin' after me. When I get well an' come home, dey tell me, 'I miss yuh' an' so on. It was real nice. de little pain an' t'ing does pass."

It is almost the end of the long school vacation and the children are shared around according to who is working. At the moment she has her sister's three youngest children and she has reared a child a woman had for her son since the girl was 3 weeks old. "Two stay by Miss Elizabeth when I go to work an' t'ing. Her daughter have two chil'ren wid my son yuh know. So we kind a family like. My daughter live here, but my son live aroun' de other street on de other side. Yeahs, an' my sister livin' across dere too. She was in de fire. An' I have one sister livin' in John John an' another sister livin' higher up de hill..just a little walk." At the moment Marion is weary of the children as she is diabetic and is looking after them while she convalesces from an operation.[93] "I can' control dem at all, dey real miserable. During de day I only have my own an' dis gran wid me. (Points) She does go down de road wid she father. An' dis one does stay by a lady, a blind lady.[94] An' when deir mother come she take dem over. It ain' easy at all. Dey into everyt'ing, everyt'ing, everyt'ing...Yeahs. Just now I got to get clothes for de school. Dis one goin' to a little private school down in Servol. De other go to big school now. I got to get her uniform ready an' de books."

The children who are old enough to work contribute to the household finances and help with the children and the housework. Marion says, "I don' cook. M' daughter does cook. Well, when I go to work in de market, I don' have time to cook..so she have to cook home." When her son comes in from work Marion is relieved, "Jackson take de chil'ren into de garden or somet'ing...Jackson works at WASA an' m' daughter work by WASA. She doin' mason an' her boyfrien' is a carpenter. Dey fix everyt'ing about de place. She like dat kind a work, she like hard work. She start around April mont' after de Carnival. Carnival she start. She always like dat work." Her son Jackson is 21 years old and has been with

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93. Marion had an appendectomy but because she is diabetic the wound is not healing and she has to go for regular dressings.

94. The little girl that she points to is a pre-school child who would presumably be of some assistance to a blind lady as well as company. There would be something exchanged here but Marion does not go into that.

WASA since he was 16. Marion's daughter and her boyfriend are currently building their own place. And we shared a little joke that Marion might get a second storey and balcony one day like an Indian family and Marion could be the granny in the hammock fanning herself. She really laughed hard and said she liked that idea.

Women as Mothers and Child Caregivers

The mother in picaroon society is considered the touchstone and mediator of contradictions between street life and family values. She is the emotional mainstay of the household and the canon of respectability.[95] It is the mother's role to set standards of conduct and vigilantly protect boundaries between the household or yard and expressions that potentially threaten the family group. Differential genderic[96] styles are set in opposition where street life is characterized by rivalry between male groupings revolving around rum parlours, gambling (card games and racing pools), ribald rhyming games and calypso, sexual conquests, team sports, gang maintenance and rivalry between sides, fetes and sexual virtuosity.[97] These sets of genderic values contradict one another and a schismogenesis between the worlds of men and women in society is experienced as personal conflict.[98]

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[95] Respectability was often used to describe Victorian middle class values. Its epicentre for women is the heart and the home. It also includes a middle class consumer power, refined manners, titles and prestige values.

[96] This term is used by Mary O'Brien in The Politics of Reproduction (1981) to refer to characteristics marked by gender.

[97] If the epicentre of respectability is the heart, the epicentre of the reputation seeker is the groin. Male creativity, potency and brute strength is celebrated and the key is power rather than prestige. Man-of-words and man-of-actions defines a world set in opposition to cultural and political colonization. Power here engages men in cultural critique and redefinition. Stokeley Carmichael (echoing Max Weber) advocated that Black power was the power to define.

The mother is the avatar of values idealized as good and proper in the family and community as a whole. The mother is formidable, sardonic and resolute in the face of all the uncertainties attendant on grinding oppression. Paule Marshall in Brown Girl Brownstone would describe the Black mother figure, Silla Boyce, as watchful, wrathful, with eyes that seared searched and laid bare, whose tongue lashed the world in unremitting distrust.[99] It is through Silla and the oral tradition of the kitchen that Selina comes to know how her identity is cast.[100] It is through everyday conversation, gossip and commess that women draw attention to social conduct of people and circumstances. Checks and balances are imposed through negotiating the tensions and setting up public discussions for these morality dramas that define the boundaries of tolerance. Making bacchanal is a way of taking a volatile family dispute into the public arena like an impromptu court when private negotiations have failed or a party has been betrayed or vanquished without being able to present their case. This is particularly powerful when a mother and her

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98. According to Gregory Bateson Steps to an Ecology of Mind (1972) there is a schismogenesis between types in social opposition that dialogue. Social order depends on how the dialectic is checked. Bateson straddles Levi-Strauss and Noam Chomsky to come up with cybernetics.

99. Paule Marshall Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) p.11

100. "When Selina comes to the full knowledge of Silla, she sees not just *the mother* but the wild teenager dancing herself into a frenzy, longing for a better life, the passionate and mysterious lover, the scorned wife, the community leader, and above all, that ancient African woman whom the entire western world has humiliated and despised." Helen Mary Washington "Afterword" p.315.

children are forced out of a man's home to make way for another woman and her children to move in or when a man is retrieving his woman from the home of her kin after quarrelling.[101]

The image of the mother is both venerated and scorned in idiomatic performance styles. To insult the mother or insinuate that she could be corrupt and sexually lascivious is an invitation to violent reprisal as a man would be expected to be outraged.[102] The pinnacle of respectability is diametrically opposed to the ribaldry of bad-talk where a jocular insult usually featuring tabooed behaviour is hurled at an opponent. This is an invitation to engage in combat as the quick witted young bard would either have a verbal comeback to fend off the insinuation with a line that was seen to vanquish the opponent or else the young man lost for words would get drawn into physical combat. Either way, the gestures are part of establishing a reputation as a man among men in the street culture. Merle Hodge has a scene in Crick Crack Monkey where "a young man going by the appellation Audie-Murphy (there were also a Rock-Hudson and a Gary Cooper in the company[103]) said to Mikey something that sounded like 'Wha 'bout yu Nennen, boy, ask she if I can't pass in by she too, nuh?'... Mikey was suddenly on top of Audie-Murphy and they were rolling all over the ground and pounding each other and threshing about with their arms and legs and dust was flying and the others were crowding round eagerly."[104] Tauntie is not one of those women that would be a bastion of the cult of motherhood and respectability as she neither goes to church or represses her sexuality in the way she fashions a living but she has taken Mikey in and is "mother" to him. This bloody tussle is pitched within the arena of parochial mores where a cult of motherhood is defended and martial combat skills are sharpened for an underworld intimately associated with all manner of conflict and violence. Perceptions of actions have a tenacious grasp on the social ethos complete with obligations in tandem with belonging and identity.[105]

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[101] See Peter Wilson's "Reputation and Respectability" (1971) and Roger Abrahams "Symbolic Landscapes and Expressive Events" pp.133-156. in Man-of-Words in the West Indies 1983.

[102] Take the scene, "His Chosen Calling" after the orator sits Cambridge Senior School Certificate Examinations and Mr Cambridge gave out a second grade. "I applied for a job in the Customs, and it didn't cost me much to get it. I got a khaki uniform with brass buttons, and a cap...

Elias wanted to beat me up the first day I wore the uniform.

'What you mother do to get you that?' he shouted, and i was going for him, when Eddoes put a stop to it.

Eddoes said, 'He just sad and jealous. He don't mean anything.' "
V.S. Naipaul Miguel Street p.36.

O take this scene after the orator had taken to drinking and womanizing and gone the way of Trinidad men. His mother approaches a pundit come politician to get a scholarship and uses crying and tears to get the amount reduced.

"The news got to Elias and he took it badly. He came to the gate one evening and shouted, 'Bribe, bribe. Is all you could do. Bribe.'
My mother shouted back. 'The only people who does complain about bribe is those who too damn poor to have anything to bribe with.'
V.S. Naipaul Miguel Street p.169.

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103. The cinema had an incalculable influence on its Trinidad audience."In its stars the Trinidad audience looks for a special quality of style...For the Trinidadian an actor has style when he is seen to fulfil certain aspirations of the audience: the virility of Bogart, the man-on-the-run romanticism of Garfield, the pimpishness and menace of Duryea, and ice-cold sadism of Widmark....Trinidadians of all races and classes are remaking themselves in the image of the Hollywood B-man. This is the full meaning of modernity in Trinidad." V.S. Naipaul The Middle Passage. 1962, p.65

104. Merle Hodge Crick Crack Monkey 1970 p.8

105. Recall Geertz (1973) "Culture consists of socially established structures of meanings in terms of which people do such things as signal

Among the older women with adult sons and grandsons there were comments made about the heartache over those who gave "trouble" and brought "shame" on the family. It was generally accepted that a son who ran foul of the law was a mother's "cross" to bear. Hester (64 yrs) had a son (45 yrs) who was in constant trouble with the police since he was a child running away with a gang of young boys. "He get kind of bad when he was little. He would go away wid dem. I got tired of lookin' for dem" His sister insisted, "Errol could get a work for he have his papers an' t'ing from prison. But he don' want to work a permanent work." While Egbert Compton who has known Hester and her family for thirty years says, "de mother an' she chil'ren can' get on t'rough de boy". Hester's daughter Gloria (42 yrs) has a son who is Rastafarian and in trouble with the law. Leroy (23 yrs) has had his first fine for possession of marijuana and Gloria insists,"I ain' t'rowing away de money I work for in de courthouse. Leroy is big man for himself. Nex' time he on his own an' de money I pay is for him to put back." Gloria insisted that she would not be always fretting over money for her son like Hester has done over Errol. Hester is always up and down taking clean clothes for Errol and feeding him from her pot.

Another mother was grieving over her son's gruesome death when he lost an arm in an accident. Molly's bandit son was a real cross for her to bear but when he was fatally injured in a high speed motorcycle chase by police Hester remarked how the boy called for his mother and was crying out that he did not want to die but "Death did take him as doctors could not save him." At the Pentecostal funeral and the ritual 9 days meetings by his mother's house Hester learnt from other mourners all the details of the chase, the accident, the last hour of a frightened renegade's plea for life and explained, "Kinsley was young an' did use' to beat his mother an' took all her little money in de courts but still an' all, the mother love' her son, dat her own blood." Molly and Hester offered support one to the other by sharing information about sons in gaol and how they were being treated there but there was much bitter rivalry between them on occasions as they each blamed the influence of the other's son and the boys they moved with for their own son's trouble.[106]

Desperate times and desperate measures often meant that mothers were blamed for the felonies committed by members of their families. Hester's estranged husband, no stranger to Her Majesty's Prison, would try to stage a scene in town of a Friday after Errol, a reputed cat burglar, forged a passport in his cousin's[107] name and Peter put his father out of his house after a

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conspiracies and join them or receive insults and answer them.." p.13.

[106] There was a contempt of women for women, the contempt which, in that room, from Mrs Stephens, was like comptempt for her own body and the body of her neighbour, slack, swollen, warn out... Mrs. Stephens knows that her gangster son is being stalked by the police and that his life is in danger. Naipaul has Stephens using his obvious intelligence in a life of crime. Mrs Stephens sitting with a graduation photo of one son in England and the Black Power effigies of the other knows the sequence that is about to run its course. *After Israel, Africa.* For the ambitious poor man attracted to crime while 'Israel' rules, life ends in a sudden splash of violence. V.S. Naipaul. Guerrillas.

[107] The cousin on his father's side is a family man with a big house and a wife and children. He is in the insurance business and has no criminal record. Errol and his cellmate hatched a plan to go to the

dispute. "John Lang say how I his wife, dis woman an he married an' how I didn' send his chil'ren to school, an' how I a whore an' ungrateful. Well I ain' start it. I know people already... I does see fight. Dey comin' aroun' to look on to see what goin' on. Well, I don' have time. I hear John Lang tellin' a lady an' dat lady mus' be sayin...'He a cross.' An' yuh know we started to go ahead when he livin' in Couva an' I by Nathan (another son). All at once de man start up wid his stupidness again...an' I don' want to humbug wid he. I go me way as if it ain' me he talkin' to. An' he drawin' a crowd in de city.. Hmmmm! An' I would look shame an' he is a man. John Lang scandalize m' name down in de Beetham Estate. He want goin' in de courthouse de t'ings he sayin'. He ain' nice by he tongue at all. He look more like an' obeahman dan anybody."

Miss Elizabeth (51 yrs) and Hester were talking about the robbery and police chase over the weekend. "Yuh hear how dere was some t'iefs here yesterday?" Hester replied, "Yes, Errol did say." Elizabeth continues excitedly, "All up in dis street here. Oh dere was police! If yuh could see t'ings. Dey break in a warehouse somewhere up by de main road. Dey have t'ings all inside...Up til dis mornin' boys an' dem went an' take t'ings out of de bushes. Maybe police don' know where dey hide it? Out dere like a carnival wid police. Errol wasn' comin' out." Hester in-

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U.S. Virgin Islands where their skills could be put to more profitable use burgling tourist resort areas instead of small businesses and private houses. Besides, Errol has court cases pending that will result in more time in gaol as his family cannot afford fines or bail money. And the underworld figure who has provided bail money in the sists, "I tellin' yuh." Elizabeth goes on, "My son went to work an' leave all dat. I was glad. I don' understan' what dem do. An' if yuh see some big TV on wheel yuh know.." Hester concedes, "Some have big TV?...Well dey strong dem fellas." Elizabeth says, "If yuh see dem ma? De, burglars... I am sure Errol was in he shack watchin'.." Hester says quickly, "He didn' want to come out for police to hold him...if police see him dey t'ink he in it too. He didn' want to come out. Dat was bacchanal. Dem fellas use' to be t'iefin' an' one house from here to dere an' de fella forcin' de key. (She makes a comic gesture to demonstrate the frustration of the man trying to get the door open with the police in hot pursuit and the two women kyack, kyack, kyack and hold their stomachs with laughter.) Aroun' here it have plenty criminals an' up by Jan an' dem side." Miss Elizabeth sighs, "De firs' t'ing I say yuh know is I glad I have no son in dose kin' of bacchanal' cause I afraid dat. Me! Anyt'ing I have is bought yes." Hester adds, "Errol went by someone sellin' in town last night an' stop dere. Yeah, because if he stay dere police an' dem last night would have been prowlin' an' dey would hol' him as if he was in it." Miss Elizabeth sighs, "Right, right, right." And two nights later the Police wake up Errol at 3:00 a.m. They find his "pig foot", haul him off to court and sentence him to gaol for 18 months.

We have seen that Rose Daniels (23 yrs) in Chapter 5 has very definite ideas about the "good mother" centered on nurturing children. The mother is supposed to love her children and to bend her will to support them under her own roof. Her children are her reason to exist. No social reality formula should change this "cultural imponderable" image of Black motherhood as manifestations of the model occur often enough for some to assume an attribution ideology.[108] The theme of Black mother forsaking all perpetuates like a blue print transmitted genetically. The literary portrait repeatedly confirms this miracle as being automatic like the traits that conferred sex and racial types.[109]

Rose speculates that her own mother was a fallen angel who has not grovelled to recover her halo in her mature years since she has moved from "Ratcity"[110] to the Beetham. "She was young but even widout she was young, now dat she reach big an' ol' den, well you see it friends an' dem grow up de way m' mother use to train her chil'ren... I don' know if it is how her mother died when she was 3 yrs old or 2 yrs? She mother died so she never really grow wid she mother?" Here Rose postulates that "maternal instinct" may actually be learned from a role model that was unavailable to her mother. When Rose confronts her mother with, "Well yuh really don' like meh yuh know. Anyone would say so!"

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past is wanting to be paid off with interest befitting the high risk on such a loan.

[108] Melville Herskovits in The Negro in the New World (1930) used the term "cultural imponderables" to describe genetically transmitted linkages. (quoted in Sidney Mintz "Foreward" in Whitten and Szwed (eds) Afro-American Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives 1970.)

[109] Mary Helen Washington referred to the image of the Black mother as a "sacred cow". "Until the sacred cow is killed these stories cannot and will not get told... I need the insight...about real black women." p.xxxii in Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women. 1975.

she is confronting a reality for her that is profoundly painful and near impossible to accept as true.

Rose was reared by her mother's sister from the age of 3 years. "I was about 3 yrs when my aunt take meh. Because she (mother) had, yuh know, when she come wid meh, she was livin' down in Ratcity. Dat was when dey had dem ol' shacks...dat was before dey move....An' den, well my aunt take meh an' so I end up growin' wid meh aunt, although she wasn' takin' care o' meh. ...She use' to work an' t'ing but it was meh dat use' to work for she. She was somet'ing else man! ...I use' to have to do everyt'ing in de house. I did come as if I was de housewife. Everyt'ing! Wash.. an' dere was a whole set of us. Only 2 chil'ren she have but she use' to take all de family an' jus' mind dem, mind dem, mind dem, yuh know, and I use' to do all. It was I use' 'to cook an' wash an' all o' dat an' I had to go to school too...it wasn' easy. I use' to always say to m'self, 'I wish dat I could be around my mother.'" When Rose became sexually active "it caused a whole big t'ing. Well m' mother ended up comin' an' takin' meh. Well, I was glad because I didn' have to do all dis set o' work. ...But m' mother didn' really care. Like some mothers would have chil'ren an' dey would care about dem." Rose's childhood experiences have left an indelible impression and her disillusionment with her own mother has turned her resolve. She is determined to be the mother to her children that her mother never was to her. "I does jus' stay by m'self wid dem...Yuh see meh, I would rather stay by my friends an' dem. I don' want dem to grow up as how I grow up."

The literature also abounds in images of the institution of adoption where children are valued and cared for by others in the community. "Children are highly prized and warmly loved. They are desired for their own sakes, and a child whose mother is too poor to look after it will be readily 'taken in' by another family group. Informal fostering of children in this way is one of the outstanding features of West Indian social life."[111] "Children are not considered a burden but something which every adult wants. ...In general the attitude towards children is one of adult rather than parental responsibility. While all adults want children, if they have too many they are quite ready to give one or two away to a good home."[112] Edith Clarke noted that these motives for adoption were true in some cases, especially where the adopting mother was barren, but there were cases where the transaction was founded on less honorable motives. "The arrangement is primarily a business one: the child is fed, clothed and, theoretically, sent to school or taught to earn his or her living in exchange for services."[113]

De Lisser's Jane's Career (1914) and Michael Anthony's The Year in San Fernando (1965) give us poignant glimpses of the 'schoolgirl' and 'schoolboy' in the homes of lower middle class

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110. Rose and many other women refer to Shantytown as Ratcity or San Ratcity.

111. T.S. Simey "Introduction" p.15. in Welfare and Planning in the West Indies 1946.

112. Madeline Kerr "Child Parent Attitudes" pp.64-65 in Personality and Conflict in Jamaica (1952) 1963.

women in Trinidad and Jamaica. And Rose's experiences in her aunt's home would suggest that the "love of children for their own sakes" was hopelessly inaccurate from where she stands. The way Sonya (31 yrs) puts it, "When yuh have 'mother' an' stepmother an' yuh doesn' belong to dem dey try to take all advantage of yuh.. Make yuh do all de hard work, dey beat yuh, and dey treat yuh like animal...An' don' send yuh to school...An' when de age came I had to leave school I had my last day."

Of all the women I spoke with and recorded in the Beetham and John John there were only three (10%) that had been reared exclusively by their biological mothers (and two of those were East Indian women). Tara and Mena grew up in St Dominique's R.C. Orphanage in Belmont as their mother suffered a stroke and their father and older brothers could not manage all the younger children. Yvonne and Hester entered St Mary's E.C. Orphanage in Tacarigua. Yvonne was reared by an adopting mother who found that she could not manage, while Hester was placed in the orphanage after her mother died. The majority of women were reared by aunts and godmothers (33.3%), grandmothers (13%), stepmothers and women who were professional child caregivers or adopting mothers. The women of this class growing up in colonial Trinidad entered 'schoolgirl' positions in middle class homes.

Fiona (38 yrs) lived with her mother and father in David Street in Port-of-Spain. Her father died before she entered her teens. "My sister was a baby when my father died. She didn' know m' father at all. She didn' know m' father' face."[114] Fiona's

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father was a driver but even before he died Fiona and her sister were working. Fiona's mother had to work and the children likewise. "Yuh see, after our father died an' t'ing she had to help us an' she had to work an' t'ing. Sometimes when I come home from school, I have to go an' cook an' t'ing an' put m' little sister in de creche...in Belmont. I have to go for her...I had to get her somet'ing to eat until our mother come. She use' to sell nuts an' t'ing..by de t'eatres she use' to work.. She come from Mrs. G (in Melbourne Street), she would go by de t'eatre and' when she leave dere...Well... when she home well she would be doin' t'ings. She had to tidy up all aroun'. An' my older sister would care for us. She mind us all de time yuh know...With whatever little she have she try to give us. Whatever we need, well yuh know..yuh understand."

Fiona does not imply that her sister was an amazon or chosen by any selection procedure other than that she was simply the oldest girl and even if her shoulders were not broad, her responsibilities would still be the same. Fiona's mother also has another man to see about but there is never any suggestion that she is anything but a good mother. If she does not spend 'quality time' with her 5 children or any time with her children for that matter, it is not from lack of 'love' or any other luxury of sentiment. The mother works, the children work and the family they

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113. Edith Clarke. My Mother Who Fathered Me: A study of the family in three selected communitites in Jamaica. 1957.

114. The life expectancy of men born between 1910 and 1920 in the whole of Trinidad is between 37 and 38 years. Men born into lower class

know survives. And for Fiona, education was as irrelevant as 'love' in the reality constructed from a perspective of being poor. She didn' "pick-up" her school lessons because "Sometimes I go an' sometimes I ain' go. Sometimes I was workin'." So although Fiona lived in a nuclear family arrangement statistically speaking, the middle class image of the model does not apply and nor do the sentiments that accompany the roles. In this household the mother struggles against the odds to keep her family together.

Reputation and respectability

Peter Wilson's Crab Antics has offered one of the richest sources of value orientations within Creole culture through identifying distinctions between *Reputation* and *Respectability*. These value constructs are essentially antagonistic and broadly based along gender lines with reputation values being associated with public domain of street life while respectability is fashioned from within the orbit of family and church. The male construct of Caribbean reputation seeking includes 'games' that play on wit, words, rhythm and rhyme within a masculine style of presentation through peer relations. The reputation seekers are often those who employ charismatic leadership abilities in the place of a 'legitimate' career path as a mark of worth and status among those whose access to fiscal strength has been barred by membership in the peripheral group of lower class 'types'.[115]

Peter Wilson proclaimed that these two counterpoising and interlocking themes or value orientations guide the principles of social conduct in Providencia and actually transcend the local patterns of relations.

Trinidad would be expected to lead very short lives and this is a repeated refrain in the lives of the women in EDR.

[115] Max Weber's analysis of leadership styles would have the reputation seeker characterized by a charismatic style countering the styles of leadership based in tradition and heredity, or legal or legitimate access to power. Similarly, the metaphor of Naipaul's Guerrilla where the picaroon is engaged in a war against the overbearing establishment

> ...Respectability...is the summation of colonial dependence: the axis of social assortment in a world originally designed for others by the European holders of power. A stratified system of classes embraces the colonial population; they differ in their access to respectability, since its availability depends in the last instance upon their access to other kinds of validation in the class system. They may embrace its significance, live with the need of attaining it, seek it actively; but when all is said and done, it is their socioeconomic position that ultimately declares their having - or lacking - respectability.[116]

In Erving Goffman's study of power, status and prestige values in the institutional setting of the hospital those who had power and status were more inclined to behave as they chose whereas those person's who courted the powerful or were dependent on the powerful in an hierarchy to make decisions that directly affected their lives, signalled prestige. Thus doctors were decidedly casual at meetings, while nurses dressed neatly, spoke with a certain deference and furnished possible suggestions for a course of treatment rather than stating an opinion that might challenge the doctor's authority. Similarly, the doctor's wife projects refinement through consumer choices congruent with the elite, through attention to 'proper' speech and assuming privilege accompanied the rest.[117] In Goffman's analysis, those who court power or who are dependent on the powerful, such as women, immigrants, marginalized ethnic groups and lower class citizens imitate the powerful as in Naipaul's Mimic Men,[118] by adopting pres-

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that keeps those at the base of the social pyramid black and poor and dangerous only to themselves.

[116] Sidney Mintz's Forward to Peter Wilson's Crab Antics 1973 p.x

[117] Erving Goffman Presentation of Self

tige values because they do not have access to wealth or the things that create wealth. They live in the shadows of power, they marry power or they align themselves with the dominant group. In the Caribbean the black skin and the white mask of the 'Afro-Saxon' is transposed into Wilson's dialectical scheme of reputation and respectability.[119]

The counterpoising or compensating system of values is defined by Wilson as reputation values which operate as leveling devices against the limited access to legitimate avenues of power. The challenge to respectability in reputation seeking is generally a masculine phenomenon or protest rooted in the cultural idiom of lower class members. The bipolar perspective of reputation and respectability values employs strategies political in character and function which is encapsulated by 'crab antics'. The structure of Caribbean social life inheres with this dialectical relationship of principles for organizing social reality. The duality of the dialectic establishes boundary conditions which rationalizes privilege and holds out the prospect of admission or exclusion from the dominant group.

Mrs Carmichael of Laurel Hill Estate observed that slavery admitted a diversity of rank and an abundance of ladies and gentlemen among the families of drivers (that is, the black overseers), head boilermen, head coopers, carpenters or masons,

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118. V.S. Naipaul. The Mimic Men (1967) Penguin 1968. Where the colonial man creates nothing and imitates the metropolitan standards.

119. Franz Fanon Black Skin White Mask deals with the middle class aspirations of people of African descent in the Colonial period where the cataclysmic denial of all that was black or African was replaced by

head servants and all would insist on being referred to by their title. It might also be observed that the care taken to distinguish the higher ranks among slaves was part of the 'crab antics' that pushed for the recognition of slaves as persons worthy of respect and capable of holding office. This insistence on titles continues in the present and certainly transcends local conduct:

> Mr. so and so: a field negro, if asked to go and tell a boilerman to come to his master, returns and says - Massa, Mr.- will be here directly. They say, "Ma'am", to a domestic servant; or if a servant be sent on a message from another family to you, your servant tells you, "there is a good lady wishes to speak wid you." Second boilermen, &c.&c. are not quite gentlemen, but stand in a middle rank, between the first, or gentlemen, and the third, or common field negro and under domestics. Upon an estate, a driver very often has a servant allowed him, - a young boy perhaps...but on Saturday or Sunday, when they go to their grounds, these head-people hire negroes, sometimes belonging to the estate...to work for them, while they work very little themselves, and merely superintend.[120]

The aphorism that cleanliness is next to Godliness is part of the construction of respectability. And while the poorer women could not boast of an 'inside' toilet or bath closet they could make the value stretch to include cleanliness and tidiness as these were within their grasp.

> All well disposed negroes are clean and neat on a Sunday; and it will not be found that those negroes who attend church or chapel regularly, are poorer, or their grounds in worse order, than those who do not go to service: the reverse indeed is the case, for I have uniformly seen that such negroes were well dressed, and their grounds in order, nor had they any want of money, - a plain proof that they are not denied abundance of time to cultivate the soil.[121]

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a white cultural persona in much the same way as Naipaul's mimicry of European forms.

120. Mrs. Carmichael Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies 1834 pp.282-283.

The genderic distinction between men and women was particularly marked in the establishment of norms for sexual conduct. Mrs. Carmichael pointed out that it was more common for women to be practising fidelity to one man than for the reciprocal attitude to be the case.

> ...Many negro men, of good character otherwise, have two or more wives; and strange to tell, these wives live on good terms with each other; they often make friendly visits to each other; but there is always one favourite for the time being...There is no jealousy on her part, so long as matters are openly conducted; but all intrigues are disliked, and are a frequent cause of quarrels.
>
> From what I have said above, it will be gathered that negro females also often have several husbands: but they have always one in particular, with whom they live. The really respectable female negro, however, has generally only one husband; and in this one particular only, is the respectable female negro more moral than the male.[122]

A scene from Merle Hodge's Crick Crack Monkey lends a glimpse of the two worlds. When Mikey took Tee and Toddan to the bridge where the 'cream of Santa Clara's unambitious' limed an abrasive interchange between the crew and the various factions within the community is played out. For while it is true that women, particularly the older women, are affiliated with family and church, the younger people are inclined to gather in 'liming' groups. One of the activities of these groups is to issue commentaries on the people passing:

> Women going past walked a gaunlet of commentary on their anatomy and deportment. And for Mrs Hinds in particular they had no mercy. Like any proper lady (it

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121. Mrs. Carmichael. *Ibid* 1834 p.289.

> seemed to me) she had a high, stiff, bottom and spectacles and stockings.
>
> 'Mind, Mis' Hinds, the bottom fallin!' a disembodied voice would offer.
>
> 'mind the bus'es and them, too, Mis' Hinds, yu might overbalance with all that weight in front there,' in a sing-song lady-voice.
>
> 'How she go overbalance,' contested another with irritation, 'that is what the bottom there for! Yu never hear 'bout ballast or what?'
>
> And Mrs Hinds would turn and lecture them with the most careful enunciation on the moral evils of vagabondage, a lecture which the boys punctuated copiously with dramatic sighs of 'Oh yes, Lord!' and 'True-spoke, sister, Amen!' and 'Glory, glory be!'[123]

For Bernadette Pleasant (73) it was important to keep from 'takin' it on' and not being able to keep oneself 'up'. "No, I never lived in de street. I said I would t'rew meself in de sea if I have to live in de street. I would put a big stone on m' neck an' go an' t'row m'self in de sea. ... Live in de street.. for people to say.. 'well look at how she come! Look how she come.....' No! Let me dead one time." Pleasant could not tolerate this subjection to shame at abandonment and thus she links health and self reliance with holding herself up and being respectable. And yet, being blind, she is constantly having to rely on others to guide her safely in the street and finding money to pay for services. "I have to call people now to light de lamp for me an' light de stove for me... An' dey takin' all de money what de government givin' me....T'iefin' all me t'ings cause I can' see."

Pleasant has other priorities for herself than living accord-

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122. Mrs. Carmichael. *Ibid* 1834 p.298

ing to the codes of respectability as she believes that some evil has been put on her (obeah) and she is anxious to have this evil exorcised. However, when she came in to talk to me, she paid the courtesy of bathing and powdering herself, dressing up in shoes and stockings, putting on costume jewellry, plus her wig and hat. These are certainly efforts to present an image of respectability along with the care to be civil and display good manners. The very idea of having a talk was framed as a respectable way to pass time at her age. Very briefly, being respectable was linked to:

a. Having money or property: Pleasant has jewellry to pawn for over $300. When she has paid the interest to the broker, she is going to take them out again. "I buy plenty gold man, because I said, if my money done I have jewels I could pawn an' pawn to $300. I could get somet'ing to live so is why I have plenty jewels... Yuh can' wear dem, dey would knock yuh down to take dem..."

b. Connexions with the church: Pleasant goes to the faith healer of the Pentecostal church but she is not 'a church-goin' person'. She is going to church to be healed of the 'evil' that was put on her by a 'dirty hand'.

c. Connexions with 'nice' people: Pleasant is very grateful to the doctors who 'sat on de board' for her and wrote the letter to the government to secure her invalid pension. However, she does not know too many 'nice' people but she thinks she should go and see a 'nice' man in the bank about money for her funeral.

d. Keeping to oneself: Pleasant is not in a position to keep to herself due to her blindness. However, many of the older women I spoke with made it very clear that 'keeping quiet' or 'keeping to yuhself' is a very important aspect of survival. It is dangerous to be frail and to engage in gossip as that has a habit of turning on people.

e. Abhorrence of the 'ordinary': The other side of affiliation with 'niceness' is this disdain for 'ordinaryness' (or 'niggeryness'). Merle Hodge's Crick Crack Monkey has Auntie Beatrice announcing to Cynthia (Tee) her firm intention to haul her out of her 'ordinaryness' and 'niggeryness'.[124] In the novel Tantie is regarded as 'natural' and Auntie is 'pretentious' in her striving for a middle class ethos of 'respectability'.

f. Education: The attitude for education is well illustrated in Hodge's novel where the little girl anticipates something akin to magic about to take place in the classroom:

> I looked forward to school. I looked forward to the day when I could pass my hand swiftly from side to side on a blank piece of paper leaving meaningful marks in its wake; to staring nonchalantly into a book until I turned over the page, a gesture pregnant with importance for it indicated that one had not merely been staring, but that that most esoteric of processes had been taking place whereby the paper had yielded up something or other as a result of having been stared at.[125]

The scene of the scramble for places at schools in Crick Crack Monkey shows that the hustle gives no quarter to anyone seeking a place for children to enter preselected classrooms.

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123. Merle Hodge. Crick Crack Monkey 1970, pp.7-8.

124. Merle Hodge Crick Crack Monkey 1970 p.95

When Tantie finds that there is no room at either the government school or the EC school for Cynthia she is forced to register her brother's child with Mrs Hinds. This excerpt illustrates how Tantie has to recapitulate and it is obvious that the school will carry children into a culture that Tantie wants desperately for her kin but which she has very little knowledge of herself:

> ...a horrible capitulation, for she'd always sworn she'd never send a dog of hers there, that woman was a mauvais-langue horse face maco with nothing to do but mind people business. We marched down to Mrs Hinds, Tantie muttering all the way her disapproval and disgust.. blasted government wouldn' build school for the chirren what the blasted government there for but to build school for the chirren now look my cross I have to put the chile by these shitters all they know is to run behind the Reveren' arse an' he wife an' smell every fart they blow when it was black-arse Reverend Joseph God res' he soul they blow they used to find their arse to Hell up in Coriaca Church on a Sunday morning me I would shit on all o' them jus' you remember you going there to learn book do' let them put no blasted shit in yu head.[126]

g. A Decent Burial: Pleasant and the older women I spoke with made much of preparing for a decent burial. "When I workin' I save a little money fo' when I die... Dey will have it to bury me because here, if yuh die, yuh have to pay thousands of dollars for funeral...$2,000! If yuh ain' get dat yuh ain' gettin' a buryin'. No, yuh ain' gettin' a buryin'...$2,000 for de cheapes' as now I am poor. So I save up m' little money we when I die me family will get it to bury me... to get a car to take me up to burial groun'. If yuh ain' got... Where dey puttin' yuh, dey puttin' yuh wid pauper, wid people who don' have money for when dey dead. I

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125. Merle Hodge *Ibid* 1970 p.20

save up a little money when de Yankees was here an' I work in de hotel. ...Save it up'.

In Patrick Solomon's autobiography, a story is told of a funeral where there are no flowers and where the scene is one of overwhelming poverty, the pauper's grave that Bernadette Pleasant wants to avoid:

> The funeral of the member who had died in the picket line was to me quite a revelation. The entire union membership except those who were still on picket duty, turned out. I had bought a wreath for his grave but it would have been better had I given money to his relatives. I had never in all my previous experience of funerals seen an interment where the grave had not been covered with flowers. In this case the wreath I provided was the only decoration. It was then, as I gazed on the barren mound of earth, that I realized that poor people cannot afford such luxuries. Not even the union funds could at that stage stretch to that length, in the middle of a strike where the workers had already tightened their belts by more than one notch[127]

h. A House: Amy (64 yrs) was living on cardboard in Tamarind Square (or Columbus Square) when I spoke with her and so the idea of having a house loomed large, but it was linked with being a respectable woman. "I want to wait for my own place n' den I can dress an' go to m' church. I make up m' mind an' I go to m' church an' all m' clean friends can come an' look for me. An' if anyt'ing happen I have m' doctor. Dat is all I want to live wid." Amy's brother is paraded as a fine example of someone who has gone ahead, ".. he have a nice home up dere in San Juan yuh know an' he have chil'ren. An' I stay for one an' de other little boy dead. De other is a big man. He gone to New York."

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126. Merle Hodge *Ibid* 1970 pp.22-23

For Hester (64 yrs) the house was a central issue as a fire had not only taken her house but it had forced her to be dependent on her children (instead of being the central figure in the family). She was given the name of 'mama' by family and friends but she did not have the power that is usually associated with the household head in a grandmother family. She slept in the second bedroom with her five grandchildren (all young men in their teens and twenty's) and was expected to do the washing and the dishes, the sweeping and other household chores. This was a constant source of contention in her current living arrangement but without her own house, she had to adjust. Whilst her daughter was household head, Hester was extremely sensitive to issues concerning the respect accorded to a mother and grandmother and on several occasions she has moved out following incidents where she thought she had not been treated with respect.

i. Marriage and Stable Unions Modelled on Marriage: Most of the older women made some reference to marriage as being the 'better' union, especially those women who were 'church goers'. Hester (64 yrs) pointed to the fact that her union had been a married one but she believed that now that she had 'sense' she would not make the same mistake again. She would not just be a 'big mistress' and 'have ring on finger'. No one would 'do her dat again'. For her the main issue was people livin' 'nice' and 'movin' good'.

Bernadette (73 yrs) was married but her husband passed her over for another woman and sold their little shelter 'over her head' and left her 'a stray'. So Bernadette does not care for marriage. Her relationship with Peter is particularly noisy and ridden with arguments but it is 'stable' in that it has been a relationship of long standing.

Vena (73 yrs) recalls a time when marriage was an option but she has spent most of her life on her own. She mentioned that her sisters had married and had children. That there was one sister who married East Indians and so she has 'house. The other sister has children who are educated in the United States and who have grown away from her.

While marriage is linked with respectability, it would seem that women are placing less emphasis on rings and titles than on the quality of the union. Marriage is a symbol of economic security and so it is usually associated with maturing years or class mobility which also concur with symbols of respectability.

j. Age: Respectability is usually assigned to the elderly as a mark of respect. Thus older women's idiosyncrasies are tolerated.

k. Manners: There is frequent reference to 'manners' and 'decency' in the language of women. Older women are often in a position to behave in a manner that they consider proper as they are usually grandmothers, church goers, and they are in receipt of a pension which gives them economic security (often for the first time in their entire lives). However, there were constant complaints about young grandchildren being 'rude' and 'miserable'.

l. Dressing Appropriately: Most women make a point of having a special dress or outfit for wearing in public. As Miss Elizabeth (51 yrs) exclaimed, she does not make joke when it comes to dressing. Many women were conversant with where to buy material for getting their clothes made by local seamstresses. Older women were particularly concerned to be covered and were appalled by the younger women who bared their shoulders and did not cover their heads in public. For the Baptist women, the dress code was particularly bland. Those women who had mourned wore long shapeless garments in a single tone when they attended meetings and this was a mark of their rank and the respect accorded to rank within the local community of followers.

The female figure who straddles reputation and respectability values is the street vendor or marchant woman. These women are revered in the community as mothers of the fiercest kind and yet when they are in their street element they can wield words and lines of the choicest wit. Roger Abrahams (1983) remarked on the paradox that is marked by the latitude extended to the *marchant* or market woman, who interface the mother of the family and generating an income and bargaining to make her sales. Market women are adept in the styles of the public performers and are fiercely attached to their own home and family. These women epitomize both reputation values and respectability values and have become something of 'type' in their communities. Merle Hodge's Crick Crack Monkey gives this description of a marchant where the school watchman, Mr. Oliver is contending with Dorothea who uses revivalist style renditions to outmaneuver her opponent, she would respond to his outbursts of wrath with a rendition of carefully selected hymns:

> On most days, every tactic having failed, he was reduced to shuffling to and fro before her muttering curses, like a dog prowling and stalking and fretting in a wide circle around an offensively sedate cat. When he was tired he placed himself on his box and opened up his newspaper, twitching it sharply at intervals and grunting to demonstrate that he had not softened or climbed down but that his daily newspaper was in the long run more important than an obnoxious encroaching marchan' woman. Then it was that Mis' Dorothea could be heard chatting cosily to him while she peeled her oranges and rolled her channa paper, telling him the latest on her big son George, then her half-sister down in Sierra Grande, and moving out towards the furtherest twigs of her family tree. Often she did not seem to have noticed that Mr. Oliver had folded up his paper and departed.[128]

Among the women I spoke with, the vendors were particularly interesting as they had a wider repertoire of experiences to relate and Mistress Mary and Miss Fielders were both 'called' to heal. The vending was only one aspect of their lives and perhaps some of the respect accorded to vendors, apart from their ability to combine the roles of mother and vender, was this role of healer. So while those unfamiliar with the street personages might see a vender squatting behind a mound of provision, a local person sees a healer who is accorded much respect within the religious community.

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127. Patrick Solomon Solomon: An Autobiography 1981 p.81

Women and the Political Process

Albert Gomes has given us some insights into the actual processes involved in a successful political career as the member for Port of Spain, South East (St. Anns). Here is a description that illustrates the attitudes of many poor women being courted by politicians with their grandcharge of schemes and ideas completely out of synch with the scale and scope of women's realities :

> I will always remember that first morning they took me canvassing. The...ward...comprises all that area of hilly Port-of-Spain where the poor live in hovels and amidst the ubiquitous cess-pits - on land whose scabrous vegetation seems to reflect the squalor and ugliness of everything that stands upon it...
>
> Knocking at strange doors...always seemed like a plunge into the unknown...you never know what sort of fellow human being might emerge from behind the door....
>
> 'Uh coming'.
>
> Soon the gate opened to reveal a stout dark woman scantily clad, barefooted, and with soap suds on her hands, which she continued to wipe energetically as she inquired of us the nature of our business. The beads of perspiration coursed down her cheeks and on to her neck as she surveyed me searchingly. ...
>
> (W)e've come about the voting. we want you to vote for Mr.Gomes. This is Mr.Gomes'. ...
>
> 'Oh,' she said looking at me suspiciously from the corner of her eye, 'so you is the mister, Eh.' And she shook her head.
>
> 'Well, to tell you the truth,' she continued, her right hand akimbo on her ample hips, her lips pursed in such defiance, 'Uh was t'inkin uh wouldn't vote at all this time. Uh cahn see what they does fur we. Uh vote so many times a'ready and t'ings still the same way. Look at the drain behind the house. Every time they come fur votes, they promise me that if uh vote for them they go fix the drain - but it still the same.'
>
> 'Ah,' chimed my companion seizing his cue, 'that's why we want you to vote for Mr.Gomes. You have to try

> a new man when all the others fail you. And he's a young man; he'll be able to give a lot of time and energy to protect you interests.'
>
> She smiled. 'Ah', she exclaimed, 'you too full uh sweet mouth. You know how to talk.' ...
>
> 'They all say the same t'ing', she said wearily. 'Mister look, Uh aint even got shoes to wear. What uh go vote for?' She lifted her right foot, thrusting it forward to display its dirty sole. Then she said with a sly, shrewd suggestiveness in her voice: 'What all you go give me fur me vote?' ...
>
> 'There are plenty of them like that, Mr.Gomes...Some wanting shoes, others claiming that if they have to vote they wouldn't have time to cook and need a little change to buy food. A lot of them trying to make money out ah the elections. They don' give a damn who wins. But never mind Mr.Gomes, we will win. That's one thing I confident of.'[129]

Success at the ballot box relied on the confidence invested in the practitioners of vote getting. And as Gomes implies the real craft was in the hands of the unscrupulous who saw to it that a profit could be made from 'election money' even when enough was spent to persuade the voter to elect a certain candidate. Another stumbling block for responsible political action, according to Gomes, was located in popular mythology:

> In popular mythology the inexhaustibility of the government's resources of revenue and the limitlessness of pay rises are as sacrosanct and unquestionable as the roundness of the earth. That is why exploitation of both these myths is the primary function of any politician wishing to reach the top.[130]

This myth is particularly popular among the urban poor who are courted for their votes every election. Marion (45 yrs) recalled hard times in the past when she was trying to support an alcoholic husband who drank all his money and would become violent to get the little money that Marion had saved. "..It had a time an' he ain' want to look of work at all, an' I have chil'ren...An' I use' to work in de grapefruit factory...An' when I come from

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128. Merle Hodge. *Ibid* 1970 p.48.

129. Albert Gomes. Through a Maze of Color 1974, pp.29-32.

work I use' to work for people who had election money... I had it real hard in my young days." The population density of East Port of Spain makes it attractive to politicians in the democratic election process and voters are courted with temporary employment and bold promises.

To be a successful politician the candidate conjured in the propaganda where this popular mythology was synchronized so that 'exploiting capitalists and oppressive imperialists were bundled together in the same condemned cell'.[131] Such a brew blended with a charismatic millennial formula complete with raising a messiah in the square indulges the sentiments of disgruntled colonial voters and inserts the politician into a colossal morality drama where Trinidad is poised at the centre of this epic advance in the struggle for righteous humanity.

Mistress Mary was one of the few women who talked about politics and politicians. Being Grenadian by birth, she was impressed with Uriah (Buz) Butler after Cipriani. In fact, she saw politicians as belonging to some cosmological genealogy where Williams was the 'father' and Butler the 'father's father'. Thus politicians do not escape the vernacular of gospels in this community where preachers and orators are regarded in awe. Williams had recognized her talents for dancing and so even though she did not know the name of his party, she knew that he had authored 'Better Village' which gave new meaning to her status as a dancer and she felt that Williams had been responsible for giving her 'poor relief'.

In this sector of the community (among others) it was

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130. Albert Gomes. *Ibid*, p.126

rumoured that Dr. Eric Williams was a member of the Baptist church. However, whether there is any substance in the rumour, there could be no doubt about the church's link with the People's National Movement. This marriage meant votes from the party faithful in the predominantly Afro-Trinidadian areas where Baptist churches flourish.

Two women, Yvonne (41 yrs) and Gwen (48 yrs) had reacted to the frustrations of unemployment by writing letters to the Prime Minister and to the various ministries in application for janitorial positions. Yvonne sent one of her children to her 'grip' under her bed to fetch all her letters of application for work from some ten years back. These included letters to the Prime Minister. However, one of the problems with the letters was that she did not include her address on some and she did not always sign her name. The letters reflected the fact that school had not prepared her for writing letters of application for employment. But what was of interest here, was that she had gone to the trouble to write to the Prime Minister for a janitorial position. It was also interesting to note that when an address was included, it was given in a respectable middle class neighbourhood. I found this common among the letters I saw to politicians and ministries for employment. The applicant located a godparent or relative in a neighbourhood outside of the Beetham and Laventille area. In most cases the letters were extremely crude and more often than not, written by children who were attending school. However, Yvonne is vexed as she does not get replies always.."Dey ain' tellin' meh what I should do, so I give up...I have to say I gettin' fed up. I try an' I try an' I don' succeed."

Gwen's little pile of letters included answers from the Prime Minister's Office (the same letter format as those of Yvonne). However, the fact that she say the political representatives as approachable and able to influence on her behalf shows some faith in government. However, Gwen is now thoroughly disillusioned with the Prime Minister because she has not got a job, which is the test of his effectiveness where she is concerned. Both Gwen and Yvonne had children who were in receipt of government assistance and both had to wait on the bureaucracy of civil service to set in motion the line of funds for their handicapped children. This would have been a fertile ground for gaining tactics that might get their cases through. For these women, the government was seen as a source of funds to fill immediate needs although the same government had been particularly tardy in responsivity.

Dancing

> When Selina dances...we see her way of being in the world. Utterly dependent on her own body (as we all are), its huge old eyes, coarse hair, dark skin, she captures in womanly movements both the pain and beauty of life and embraces them both. She dances memory and passion, expressing her own individuality, her reflections of other people, and the needs of us all caught in this cycle of life and death.[132]

From Paule Marshall's portrait of Selina dancing we glimpse the fact that this dancing is no kinesthetic sport but a reflection of cultural and emotional aesthetics within society. The dance is not subject to scientific inquiry as science has no way of expressing more subtle feelings and the intangibility of experiencing spacio-temporal movement monitored by emotional guidance. The dance is relegated to art, indeed fine art. Art however, cannot be divested of vitality for it springs from life's essence and to explore the dance one has to experience movement and the symbolic world of the dance.[133]

A theme that echoes through the annals of history is the passion for dancing among slaves. Even if slave owners exploited this proclivity for dance to suggest that of all creatures, none could be so happy as the slave, for no other society is so inclined to dance. Dancing appears to be central to the psychologi-

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131. Albert Gomes. *Ibid*. p.114

[132] from Afterword, Mary Helen Washington p.322 in Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones. New York: Feminist Press 1959.

[133] To explore the dance experience see Margaret H'Doubler's Dance: A

cal well-being of the slave population as through the dance there was an opportunity for any sense of communalism as well as clandestine activities. We have already noted in chapter 1, that the dance figures prominently in the theatre of revolt among slaves. In the excerpt that follows one can see that the dancing had an abrasive edge for the European culture treated the music as 'noise' and all that was African was seen as somehow primitive or primeval. The dance has persisted to the present. Charles Kingsley (1871) would write:

> To the music of tom-tom and chac-chac, the coloured folk would dance perpetually till ten o'clock, after which time the rites of Mylitta are silenced by the policeman, for the sake of quiet folk in bed. They are but too apt, however to break out again with fresh din about one in the morning, under the excuse - 'Dis am not last night, Policeman. Dis am 'nother day.' ...These tom-tom dances are not easily seen...The Negro is chary of admitting white men to his amusements; and no wonder. (One is reminded of the exchange between Plantocrat and Slave):
>
> 'Well, John, so they gave a dignity ball on the estate last night?'
>
> 'Yes, massa, very nice ball. Plenty of pretty ladies, massa.'
>
> 'Why did you not ask me, John? I like to look at pretty ladies as well as you.'
>
> 'Ah, massa: when cockroach give a ball, him no ask da fowls.'[134]

In her book Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the

Creative Art Experience 1940, 1957

[134] Charles Kingsley At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies (1871) 1913, pp.307-308.
Note on language: The saying; 'when cockroach have party him no ask fowl,' has the meaning that is derived from this scenario of the white master having his pickings of the ladies present in direct competition to the male slaves. It also has another level of meaning in that the dances were a mask for religious activities or obeah worship, the penalties for which included hanging and beheading, severing of the ears and branding, and banishment from the land. So it would be no surprise

White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies Mrs Carmichael included a section on *slave recreation*, which seemed rather odd to any definition of 'slave'. In it, she said that slave recreation could be summed up in a word: *Dancing*. Errol Hill's Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre (1972) the history of slavery included slave dancing for the entertainment of French hosts in the nineteenth century. And on particular occasions, slaves would hold subscription balls or *bouquet balls* and name a king and queen to preside over the entertainment.

In 1824 an Investigation was held to report on Negro Character where some space was given over to descriptions of Negro dances. Of course, there was only ever one side of the story of Negro Character told, and the mandate on information did not extend to the slaves themselves. However, here is an excerpt from the investigation:

> At the end of the month as was customary the slaves were given a feast and a dance. The manager and his friends cut up the meat and shared it out together with wine and rum. Everyone was happy and the negroes danced till eight the next morning.
> Q: Are they not frequently too much fatigued from the labour of the week to be able to dance on Saturday night?
> A: Never; but I have frequently known them to be too much fatigued on Sunday morning to go into their grounds.[135]

Another excerpt from the Enquiry into Slave Character was given by Antoine Victoire St Bresson:

> On these occasions they have roast pigs, roast fowls and capons, sometimes hams, a great variety of cakes and fruits, rum and claret, with coffee and chocolate,

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that slaves made such rites their exclusive province.

> sugar and syrup, as much as they can eat and drink. There entertainments begin with a dinner, and last until daybreak the next morning, being from twelve to eighteen hours, during which period some of the negresses will go to the expense of changing their dresses two or three times; they wear muslin gowns, Indian smonckers, Madras handkerchiefs, ear-rings and necklaces in profusion, and many dress in shoes and stockings.
>
> - Do not the regulations restrict dancing beyond nine o'clock at night?
>
> - They do; but on common occasions you cannot restrict them to that hour unless you leave your bed yourself; and on the particular occasions I allude to, they would be so discontented if not permitted to follow their usual custom, that no master would venture to prevent it.
>
> - How often do these bouquet balls occur, and are they always in the same expensive style?
>
> - About once in every two months in my quarter, with very little variation in the same style, and I believe they occur as frequently in every other part of the island.[136]

On the Laurel Hill Estate Mrs Carmichael makes special mention of the festive seasons of Christmas, New Year and Easter. She has left us with a description of Christmas day:

> We had a cold dinner at three o'clock, that our negroes might have sole use of our kitchen and oven; which were soon filled with good things - hot and cold roast fowls, pork roasted and soused, and plenty of pies, both of meat and of fruit; cakes from St. Josephs, and fruit in every variety. Mr. C. gave them some wine and porter; besides which they had bought some. I went about nine o'clock, and found them all well dressed. The prevailing costume was thin muslin, and some had coloured slips on. Shoes were not universal; but many had handsome necklaces and ear-rings. Their headkerchiefs were gracefully put on; and the whole was managed with an attention to politeness and decorum, that was certainly very creditable. The music consisted of four female singers, one drum and three women with chac chacs. There was no drinking or fighting; they supped very late, and kept it up until sunrise; and dance the next night, as long and a merrily elsewhere.[137]

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135. Quoted in Anthony de Verteuil The Years Before 1981 pp.219-220

The reason why the cultural expressions of song, dance and music have been included here is because the women I spoke with gave so much importance and emphasis to the need to express themselves in song and dance. It was incidental to other things that were being discussed but it invariably appeared in the conversations. It was the thereness of it that struck me as I transcribed and indexed the content of our conversations.

Women talked about dancing in different settings and contexts. There was the street dancing of the Carnival, the dancing at fetes, which were further divided into ol' people fetes and disco dancing, and there was dancing that happened in a religious and cultural context, and the dancing at christenings, family gatherings and weddings. So dancing was part of cultural and religious expression, dancing happened among age specific groupings, dancing was part of special extended family celebrations and dancing is part of the grand cultural explosion in the spectacular annual pre-Lenten Carnival celebrations.[138]

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[136] Quoted in Anthony de Verteuil *Ibid* 1981 pp.220-221.

[137] Mrs Carmichael *Ibid* 1833 pp.288-289

[138] "Playing mas isn't playing the ass. It got men who plan their bands and costumes years ahead, and employ draughtsmen and other technical experts to advise them, and spend months doing research in the libraries and archives."

When I asked Vena (73 yrs) what she might change if she could have her life over again she said, "Well dat wouldn' happen, yuh see...Dat is de trouble..Wouldn' happen. But I remember long ago I would have go dance.' But she was raised by one of those church going ladies and had worked out in people's houses where dancing was definitely not encouraged. Anything that signalled an alternative culture to the European standard was spurned and Vena came to fear showing those aspects of herself that were contemptible and an offence to the divine personage of her mistress's God. She looks back with longing to all that she would change to make herself anew, but she reflects with a smile on the days with her mother when she was very young.

Vena remembers the Parang bands that would come by the house on Christmas morning when she was a child with her mother in Maracas Valley. "An' on Christmas mornin' dey come an' dey wake yuh up (Vena sings 'Navidad and dances across the room with short light steps and for the moment she is transported. When she dances her age is lost in these movements that have carried her and many like her through sequences of expression whose meanings

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Sam Selvon. **Moses Migrating.** p.114.

Carnival begins, officially, foreday morning on the Monday before Ash Wednesday. That is not to say that Trinidadians say their prayers and go to bed early the Sunday night, in order to have the strength and endurance to face the rigors of the two-day mas. In truth, they have scarcely opened their eyes from dreaming of a White Christmas before the Carnival nightmare starts, and in the next two months or so, week by week the tempo and excitement, the preparations and the tuning-up work up steam for the big explosion on Monday morning when the cocks begin to crow....

What happens the Sunday night, more than less, is drunkin parties and dances all night long until forday morning, when the revellers move out to the street to play Jouvert, the real beginning of the Carnival.. Sam Selvon **Moses Migrating.** pp.158-159, flow from her particular world)... An' dey play on chac-chac. I use' to play parang yuh know. My mother use' to make pastels, fried pork, cassava bread (for the parang band). Yes, use to give dem somet'ing' nice to eat an' drink. Dey use' to drink poncha creme. So all of dat, ginger beer, nice drinks...I can make ginger beer.. (She drifts into another Spanish Parang tune)". Don't mind that Vena was old and that she insists that her memory "have me a little foolish sometimes," she could remember hymns and recite verses of songs and calypsos which she drifted into so easily in conversation. And like the songs and verses there were movements as well rehearsed and as powerful in their performance. For an illiterate woman these well rehearsed ideas have rhyme, tune and meter. These words and dance sequences were part of an ideological core that put her in touch with her neighbours and friends along with her roots in an oral tradition. It was also a convention for guiding emotions through song and movement where the synthesis betrayed connections with a way of being-together.

The adventure of colour and dressing in style was part of the dancing, especially for older women who attended bouquet balls. I noted that Vena had dresses that she had crafted hanging up like trophies in brilliant colours, crimson with sequins appliqued in leaf shapes about the bodice. She had another silver and mauve frock there too but she lamented: "Yuh know how long I stopped from goin' dancin'. I don' have no friend again. No, since I get big it had lost all m' friends...I have no friend in John John only big ol' people like meself an' dey ain' friend, only 'good mornin' an' 'good evenin'. Yuh know each of us is respectful with, cause all of us under one shelter.."

Lora (76 yrs) experienced the abrasive edge of cultures in conflict when she was a girl working in Frederick Street and she felt it the more when Carnival was in full swing right outside her gate. She would climb up on the gate to get a better view but her mistress would scold her for being so indelicate as to perch herself up there, "Get down from dere. If de Lord sees yuh he will laugh at yuh, yuh know!" Her mistress would remind her that Carnival was the work of the Devil and say how those people "must be feelin' bad". Lora was always reminded that the worst thing that could happen to her was to behave like "she belongs to dem". But things have changed a lot since Lora worked on Frederick Street. She worked for an American oil company family and found that they enjoyed playing mas. It was a game to them as games and dances are to the majority of people in Western culture. It was entered into because it was fun a time to be gay. But Lora had spent too long hidden behind the fence to change completely and admits, "I like ol' time t'ings.. young people, de way deir dress right up to here (pointing to just above her knee) an' how deir back on de outside. Me ain' in dat, nuh. Dey say, yuh is a real Tobagonian ol' time... I ain' showin' m' leg outside. But I like to watch people... When m' gran come from de States she all outside.. She a gypsy. Melissa (her 6 yr. old great gran that Lora is minding) like listenin' to de radio an' dancin' an' playin tricks. De only time she ain' doin' dat is when she sick. Carnival Tuesday I cook an' take Melissa by de gate an' make her sit down by Miss Henry. But soon she will be able to go by herself yuh know wid de school. But she already tell yuh all about de bands an' dem. She come an' tell me an' I say, yuh keep quiet now. ..."

"My daughter, well like to watch carnival. When dey come over here (from the U.S.) dey like to dance. From de time she reach dis gran is gone (points to one of many photographs). An' dis great gran she play mas last year an' I say 'I hope when yuh finish yuh go to church an' pray God.' An' she say, 'I ain' do not'ing. Yuh too ol' timish, yuh too ol' timish.' Lora could have learnt the lines she uses on her grans and great grans from her strict employer. But on reflection Lora says that she wishes that she could be like her little 6 year old great gran and that she could dance and go to carnival with her school. "Dese young people wouldn' take what I had to take, but now I can' really change back." For Lora there is a sense that she has passed her time for dancing and she recovers something of the joy that she missed out on by watching her great gran entering into the spirit of Carnival, knowing the calypsos, knowing the bands and being able to dance with the radio on without fear of censure.

Mistress Mary (69 yrs) learnt to dance in Grenada as a girl and has a reputation as a Shango dancer.[139] Egbert Compton

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[139] Dances are associated with religious worship as the Cartesian mind-body split has not transformed the rites of a people who were kept illiterate and ignorant of the plantocrat's Christianity until the eve of emancipation. Raymond Smith witnessed dance patterns in religious expression that were particularly reminiscent of the nineteenth century description here by Duff:

(pensioner) sounding just a little amused remarked, "And Mistress Mary go an dance up Shango in Catholic Church when de priests an' dem had us for a little church an' party." To those who knew nothing of the nature of the dance, Miss Mary looked like an old lady with nimble feet in traditional French West Indian costume. Among the worshipers of Shango, however, there is little blending of Christian elements in ritual performances for I have yet to find an orthodox Christian liturgy that incorporates drumming, dancing and spirit possession as core elements in the conduct of parishioners.

Mistress Mary has been dancing for a long time, for as long as she can remember. When she showed me her photographs she pointed to one and said, 'Dis one was de first time Eric Williams said he wants some people was to dance dis bel aire. Some people from America came...an' from different country' but it is white people.[140] We went, we had a lot of food an' t'ing an' we went

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The ceremonies vary in form, but they always consist of a dance....during this dance, the performer throws herself into every possible variety of attitude; tubles, jumps, and foams at the mouth, while the assembled multitude follow her in singing some nonsensical words, understood neither by her nor them. When all have, by the physical effects of such gymnastics on their nerves, reached a sufficient degree of frenzy, the special worshippers are beaten with a bush rope, or piece of root, often until the blood flows, to punish them for their neglect of the water mamma worship or some offence that they have given her. When this has abeen sufficiently done to appease the anger of the water mamma, a calabash of water, after certain mumblings, is thrown on them while kneeling, and the performer then informs hes dupes that the water mamma's favour has been secured, and that she will meet her alone in the bush and obtain what is wanted; generally, the name of the person who has been the cause of someone's sickness, or some disease among stock, or some death in the family."

down to St James."

Miss Mary remembers the days of her youth when she could dance with a greater sense of vitality. She reminisces, "Don' you fin' my face now ol' an' look at dat eh." She sighs as she looks at her photograph and a sense of being forlorn creeps into her face until the moment of lament passes. Miss Mary made many comments about growing older and there was nothing gracious about this aging process to her. She was frustrated with the declining strength and the wrinkled face in place of her strength and face of youth. As with most women of her vintage, her face was framed by a head tie that was tied up high as I had seen women wearing them in the French islands. There are all manner of ways to fashion a headtie but Mistress Mary prides herself in these displays of African heritage. "Like de Africans...I dance belaire with Miss Beryl McBurnie, yeahs." And Miss McBurnie is a national hero renowned for her struggle to keep alive the traditional dancing that was created out of the link between slaves of Africa and

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140. "..Culture is a dance - not the dance that people do when more than three of them get together - but the one put on in native costume on a stage. Culture is music - not the music played by well-known bands and nowadays in the modern way, tape-recorded - but the steel band. Culture is song - not hte commercial jingle which, as much as the calypso, has come the folksong of Trinidad, nor the popular American songs which are heard from morning till night - not these, but the calypso. Culture is, in short, a night-club turn. And nothing pleases Trinidadians so much as to see their culture being applauded by white American tourists in night clubs.

This talk of culture is comparatively new. It was a concept of some politicians in the forties, and caught on largely because it answered the vague, little-understood dissatisfaction some people were beginning to feel with their lives of fantasy.
V.S. Naipaul The Middle Passage.pp.76-77.

plantocrats from France and Spain. McBurnie resisted the trend for imported styles and standards that promoted purely European forms in cultural expression for the dance while discouraging those expressions that told another story through dance.

Mistress Mary has continued to dance as this is central to her identity. It is part of her social and religious practice and not any peripheral phenomenon in her life. Dancing is essential. She would say "I's a dancer, I dance de bel aire". And on several occasions she talked about her love of those drums that call on her to dance in her religious community or church. As she grows older she laments the loss of her strength and flexibility of movement for it means that she can no longer dance as she once did. There was a time when she was well known for her talent. "An' den I use' to dance with Better Village. I was de queen of Better Village. An' it come after dat, dat my body is too weak. I learn others to dance."

Dancing for Mistress Mary is not a matter of parties or a recreational diversion from the things that matter, in fact she protests vigorously when I suggest that she might still go to parties or fetes. "No, no, no... I have done away wid all dat, I stopped. I baptized." She also points out that she is a respectable married woman and that she has children who are married. Being respectable does not admit to dancing at such venues as parties or fetes. The dance cannot be lifted from the context of the dance for these things have their signifying potential and Mistress Mary knows where she belongs and how her dancing is read by others. One of her daughter's children is a boxer who is now living in Africa. And her granddaughter has dougla and chinee children. So I am shown a volume of photographs that tell the story of Mistress Mary's family and record the numerous times that she has stood in for children and taken out a picture at the christenings. Then she shows me more photographs of her days of dancing.

We see with Miss Mary that dancing was only one of the skills required of the dancer as the costumes are part of the total expression. She wore a waisted bodice, a full length skirt parted at the centre to reveal a lace undergarment. Around her shoulders was a shawl and her headtie was knotted at the top of her head. Miss Mary was proud of her involvement and mentioned that her legs can't help themselves when she hears the music. Then with no great encouragement from me she went to find one of her costumes and took herself outside. She called a few people to come and clap for her and soon she was singing and dancing like a young woman. For the moment she was lost to the world and completely caught up in the dance. In the clapping and singing she no longer concentrated on the fear of tripping and falling as she did when she started out. She was linked in with those who clapped, with those who entered the spirit of the dance though she was the one executing the steps and singing. She would always end by saying, "I don' t'ink I dance again".. and then in the next sentence she would be planning to dance again just one more time, "We have a Christmas an' t'ing yuh know, parang. Spanish people come an' sing... So after I went an' sing an' dance wid dem."

Where she grew up in Grenada she danced the bel aire, "I use' to do dat in Grenada. But is not de same language. Dis bel aire business dey does sing it in English but Grenada in French.[141] We do it in French an' we sing it in French." So Mistress Mary is not just multi-lingual but multi-cultural as the language is something that she does things in and can hold her own in. The language is the rubric for expressions of cultural significance, the medium for the transporting of messages including these symbolic gestures that cannot be separated from the carnal in their execution.

Mistress Mary does not mention having danced at Carnival or played mas in a Carnival band in the days before she was baptized although it would be hard to imagine how she could resist dancing if she heard the music. She loved to dance and she projects something magical in effect through the dance even in her advanced years. On her wall, however, is a photograph of her late husband dressed in a uniform covered in medals, ropes and symbols of honour and decoration. The uniform was in beige satin and the boots were also in beige. So at least on one occasion the cleaner of the Besson Street Police Station became the 'Commissioner' for a day. Reversals in roles and class positions are common in carnival revelry and her husband would have had ample opportunity to study his Carnival character in minute detail. So dancing in costume at Carnival the reveler projects many messages and can entertain many aspects of the character portrayed as well as impersonating the chosen masquerade. Dressing in costumes is fraught with possibilities for creative purposes as well as political possibilities. We have seen that reversals are very popular vehicles for mocking everyday inequities and challenging the blindness of routine.

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[141] Grenada was held by the French from 1664 to 1763 when it was ceded to the British in the 7 Years War. EPICA Task Force. Grenada: The Peaceful Revolution. Washington DC, 1982.

Amy (64 yrs) is now living on cardboard in Tamarind Square and while sitting on the park bench in the sun she recalled her youth. "When I was young I play m' mas an' I did use' to play mas an' I had a band... but I can' remember de name for it is a long time. I never go wid dat... but I use' to dance an' I keep dat an' when done, de money dat I make....Oh yeahs! Because I know good men, lawyers an' magistrates. I say boss, $10. I ain' regret dose days eh, nuh. Anybody could tell yuh dat...dat I go dere an' I use' to come by (gives the name of a place) Monday night, Tuesday night down at Skinner Park, Woodbrook. No, I never regret. I say I done wid dat an' I done. Don' t'ink about mas."

Like many older women the days of revelry and carnival bacchanal have been put behind her. There are requirements of decorum that accompany the advance in years. "Yuh can' move too fas' yuh know. Yuh mus' t'ink for yuhself an' when yuh mind tell yuh dat yuh done wid dat, yuh done wid it. Dat Man of God, He is not a Cocky-eye God, no.... I don' t'ink I would play m' mas again. So I baptize an' I does follow de church in St Anns. A good t'ing is a good t'ing an' yuh pray to God Almighty an' He boun' to help yuh. He must help yuh if yuh heart pure. But if not pure, yuh would never see God, nuh!" So Carnival days are gone as Amy is now advancing in years and is talking much about a decent finale. Being respectable or decent and pure is divorced from anything to do with playing mas according to her Baptist colleagues. "Yuh know lady, if it was now I was to go (die) I haven' sufficient money for dey to bury me. I haven' sufficient money to go up dere (looks heavenward). An' down here yuh can' buy a house now uh.... Lord I mus' get a place an' den I can dress an' go to m' church..an' if anyt'ing happen.. When God take meh, well I play m' mas. I ol' now, I aren' young." So Amy is saying many things about Carnival and about its place in the cycle of life. As a Baptist she has not stopped dancing entirely but what she dances in church wears a very different mask. When Amy is "hot" or "catchin' de power" it is not "dancing" but trumping the spirit.

Mistress Lang (64 yrs) and Mistress Simpson (51 yrs) are both Baptized but have resisted the pressure to go and mourn because they are much too fond of their 'big-people' fetes on Wrightson Road to give up their pleasure for their religious quest just yet. They pride themselves in the way they can dress. "When I ready I dress, yeahs. I dress to go out." Hester and Elizabeth have hit on the idea of leaving "early" to avoid the rush so they take a "cool walk" home at 3.45 in the morning after drinking and dancing until that hour. This way they can still go to market early and have their Sunday. Hester describes her elaborate preparations, "I wear a flower dress, red. It have green in it, a nice little flower dress Nadine did give meh...an' m' pink shoe an' m' stockin's...An' I comb down m' hair nice... I wash it, put some grease. Sylvia comb it down in one 'lastic an' she put in m' pony-tail an' put two combs on de side. Hear dem, dey say, 'Eh eh Mama lookin' nice, boy...What!' Everyone watchin' meh an' shew-shewin'... Elizabeth had on a nice dress... shinin' dress my dear. An' she hair well t'ing up in one...a kind of an Afro. An' she nice little ear rings an' she chain an' she nice little shoe...black shoe she had on. Only one of de misters did come, dat was Miss Elizabeth's friend. So I jus' sit an' dey entertain me very well. I ain' know de people but I sittin' an' dey say lady come, come wid us man....drink up an' t'ing. But Hester and Elizabeth have set a boundary of their tolerance. They will not be attending the WASA fete. 'Me ain' goin' to dat one. Dat one is WASA own an' I don' like WASA fete. Dey have all dey women an' hmmmm! ...it has some women dat want to start makin' bacchanal. Yuh can tell Leo he could go..it does be $15. but if yuh go by de record shop it does be $12. Yuh jus' pay yuh money an' inside yuh is. Dey havin' some macho fete too, but dat mus' be all dem young people. But de black an' white are mine. If Miss Elizabeth are goin', I will go. But if she aren' goin' I won' go 'til nex' year, Please God if I live."

Hester and Elizabeth have been fete partners for twenty years. I asked Hester how Elizabeth's husband felt about his wife going out to these fetes as he himself does not go, nor wish to accompany them as he is terminally ill. "Nuh! He don' go m' dear...He does be troublin' meh... I comin', I comin'...He say go ahead man. He is a nice mister. He does let she go to dose fetes...'Cause it is me an' her. But if it was by she-self he mightn' let her. Me, an' Miss Elizabeth friends long time, since in John John.

Women and the church

> ...In the early nineteenth century Christianity was the only means available to the slaves for seeking a society-wide system of social justice - and certainly the only one acceptable to those with power - and we know just how ambiguous that justice was in practice. While it would be wrong to ignore the fact that religion is more than social ideology, and that Africans in the West Indies derived more from Christianity than an avenue of social justice, we cannot fail to see the Christianization was a deliberate piece of social engineering. It surely stands as a case study in that art, for although the predictions of chaos and disorder to follow emancipation were exaggerated, there can be little doubt that Christianity helped to ease the transition - and put off the day of reckoning.[142]

Sacred symbols connect a world view of actuality into a comprehensive belief structure. According to Clifford Geertz (1973) religion functions as a cultural system.[143] Religion meshes human action with a cosmic project through the stock and trade of cultural acts: a system of symbols interfaces political, social, psychological and spiritual realities. Human thought depends on symbols not only to cope with the anxiety of lived-reality and common sense practicality but to create order and reasonable explanations that amplify human connexions beyond the embeddedness of immediate existence. Functionally incomplete humans believe in absolutes and establish links through tradition and its permutations in an ongoing dialogue with itself and the reality of current circumstances. For Geertz religion is essentially:

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[142] Raymond Smith "Religion in the Formation of the West Indian Society" in Martin Kilson and Robert Rotberg The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays 1976 p.341

[143] Clifford Geertz. Religion as a Cultural System pp.87-125 in The Interpretation of Cultures 1973.

> (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[144]

Black womanhood and church affiliation connects current practice and belief structures with a past shrouded in the subterranean world of slave religious life.[145] In the religious cultural world created by slaves the proliferation of cults nurturing African forms would only slowly emerge in post emancipation society. The transmission of culture rarely complies with conscious intention and in the history of the Caribbean where ignorance and irreligiosity were forced on slaves, social transactions such as rites of marriage, birth, baptism and death were matters conducted under the anonymity of slavery and under the canopy of night.

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[144] Clifford Geertz. *Ibid* p.90

[145] "The religious life of the peoples of the West Indies is shot through in every direction with superstitious beliefs which obviously stem from African religions. ..everywhere there are sects and practices which are a constant source of trouble to Governments and Churches alike ...the 'shouters' and the Shango cult have many adherents in Trinidad... All these sects pander to superstition. Day by day 'healers' extract money from the credulous, who come from the middle classes as well as the masses. the 'services' in bush churches and chapels not only undermine the work of the regular christian denominations, but by exciting deep emotion and maintaining it at a high pitch for hours on end, perhaps all through the night or even for long periods, the energies of the devotees are sapped, and the economic life of the people is as deeply undermined as the spiritual. T.S. Simey. Welfare and Planning in the West Indies 1946, pp.37-38.

Planters feared the force of spiritual persuasion as the stuff that feeds the fanaticism necessary to drive and sustain resistance and revolution.[146] And in Trinidad the legacies of a link with Africa are strengthened as post emancipation African indentured labour introduced between 1840-60 were predominantly 'freed slaves' from the Yoruba, Kongo and Hausa tribes.[147] Many of these freed slaves settled in Eastern Port-of-Spain and remained as an integrated community. Similarly, emancipated slaves established villages and sort religious leadership from those who had been dominant during slavery; the drivers, headmen and 'kings' who had organized the rituals surrounding births, deaths and important rites of passage in the slave community. Elements of worship identified as African such as dancing, drumming and 'obeah' persisted and still remain in contemporary rituals. The persistence of stable forms might suggest that there are parallel cultures in society kept separate by ethnic loyalties and class boundaries. Paradoxically, orthodox Christianity of the middle classes has remained in tact. Thus the traditions of Africa and Europe have not completely crossed over due in part of the period of proscription that sent the Spiritual Baptists and Shango cultists underground, while the alienating experience of Anglican and Catholic worship for lower class Afro-Trinidadians failed to fulfill the spiritual and personal needs of many people from this cultural background.[148]

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[146] This fear of religion as an agent for rebellion is demonstrated in the history of slave rebellions. And the powerful deterrents instituted by slave management practices and laws is abundantly persuasive in a planter psyche that verges on paranoia. See excerpts from Naipaul's The Loss of El Dorado in chapter 1.

[147] Maureen Warner Lewis. 'African Impact on Language and Literature' in Crahan and Knight (eds) Africa and the Caribbean; Legacies of a Link 1979, p.102

The symbol systems of religious mythology in the Caribbean have shown signs of transculturation as syncretic processes were drawn into variants of European and African doctrines.[149] Among members of lower class populations there are many variations in form and content, but generally speaking, the European denominational churches offered a style and symbol system that was alien and out of synchrony with modes of Afro-religious conduct.[150] On the one hand, efforts to invade the psyche of Africans with the Christianity of Europe were retarded by the fears of the planter class and slave resistance against another violent assault in the name of 'civilization'. On the other hand, The Pauline epistles use the metaphors of slavery (redemption, justification and reconciliation) as touchstones for the symbolic structure of Christianity.[151] Such emancipatory symbols had a definite appeal among those who had been 'set free'. Ambivalence between cultural, political and social values wrenched the individual into a schizophrenic struggle for spiritual integrity among the souls of Black folk.[152]

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[148] See Raymond Smith "Religion in the Formation of the West Indian Society" 1976 p.328

[149] George Eaton Simpson (1976) 'Religons of the Caribbean': The black religious cults of the Caribbean may be classified under five categories: (1)remodeled African religions,(2)ancestral cults,(3)revivalist cults,(4)spiritualist cults, and (5)religio-political cults. p.291.

[150] Suzanne Langer. Philosophy in a New Key suggested that humans can adjust to anything imagination can cope with; but cannot cope with chaos. Human symbols *orient* people in nature, in what is being done: symbols of the *Weltanschauung* and *Lebensanschauung*. Thus ritual enters daily activities to reassert morale and enshrine divinity.

When dealing in the symbolic realm it is important to underscore an wholistic approach as slaves like the masters could not be conscious of all the ramifications of religious acts or the traditions that gave birth to those rituals. In stressing the link between the symbol and the imagination, Langer is stressing a cultural link between the believer and that which can be believed.

Planters feared any system of beliefs that might be used to galvanize the spirit of rebellion among slaves.[153] To contemporary thinking, it is incomprehensible that Catholic and Anglican Churches presided ober the souls of planters and in the main neglected the plight of slaves (or worse than that, corruption was rife and the church aided pro-slavery causes).[154] Notions of human equality before God, the inviobility of the human soul, the freedom and dignity of the individual person irrespective of earthly power or status and divine authority residing in a supreme power were considered radical and dangerous when cultivated in the minds of slaves. Planters were loathe to admit any agency for converting slaves[155] and when missionaries entered the barracoon yards their success was tempered by the ability of missionaries or slave converts to proselytize amongst members of secret cults. In a society being scuttled into slave emancipation by the conscience of Europe, religion was given key powers in a radical shift to 'civilize' slaves and thus avoid the blood spilt in revolutions of this magnitude. The sin of slavery was lost in the graphic denunciation of ignorant sinful slaves caught in the web of social Darwinism.[156]

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[151] Orlando Patterson Slavery and Social Death Redemption: release from enslavement, through Christ crucified the believer is emancipated from sin to life eternal. J.G. Davies "Redeemed, justified, reconciled, man is elevated from the status of slave to that of son, and becomes 'an heir through God' of the promised salvation." pp.70-71.

[152] The Souls of Black Folk is borrowed from the title of W.E.B. Du Bois's 1903 publication that searched into the recesses of religion, the profound passions of great sorrow and the struggle of souls that echo through the music of Black America.

[153] Any systemic theology or mythology is by its very nature, transforming in that it offers the power of transcendence. Whether the belief structure is modelled on African polytheism or Christian monothesism the deity of slaves would offer masters no peace or rest.

[154] Corruption was rife In Trinidad and the Catholic Church had priests who were not immune from the general tenor of moral conduct. "Fr. Angelus, the Parish Priest of Port-of-Spain, who did not perform his duties, was disobedient to his superiors, and was guilty of fergery. Governor Picton wrote on 18 September 1805, "Being well acquainted with the wretch's total want of religion, morality and common principles of honesty I am not in the slightest surprised at his conduct. A bad priest is the worst of all bad men." See Anthony de Verteuil Sir Louis

> "Whereas previously many slaveholders had feared slaves with religion, now they feared slaves without religion even more. They came to see Christianity primarily as a means of social control...The religious history of the period formed part of the great thrust to reform slavery as a way of life and to make it bearable for slaves."[157]

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ce Verteuil 1973 p.11.

[155] Orlando Patterson Slavery and Social Death Anglican masters abandoned religion or made a mockery of it. 'Protestantism by its very nature demanded the liberating conception of the crucifixion, with its emphasis on personal choice and freedom. Realizing this, the West Indian masters did everything possible to keep their slaves in ignorance of their creed - giving in only when, a few decades prior to abolition, they found their policy to be too easy a target in the propaganda war of the abolitionists. pp.72-73.

[156] The survival of the fittest through natural selection idea could be interpreted in the interests of maintaining the *status quo* by attributing power inequities to genetic dominance, then overlaying that with a Christian ideology ordaining existing socio-political arrangements and caucasion superiority.

Louis de Verteuil felt that Christianity was removed from other human institutions as its savour was drawn from "supernatural sap" and would impart the ideals regarding "natural justice, mutual assistance, equality in the advantages and burdens of civil society, individual freedom... and all are the fruits of Christianity." (p.34)

> ..ought not the local authorities and the home government to encourage, by all means, the diffusion of Christianity, and aid those who have the peculiar charge of preaching evangelic morality and Scriptural truths? Not only will they thus indirectly lead the people to be peaceable, but they will also, by teaching them their duties, contribute to form - of not inapt materials - useful members of society, faithful subjects of the crown, industrious and saving communities.[158]

Cultural transmission of religious doctrines for socio-political purposes within the complex contradictions of a plantation economy and mercantile capitalism supported at the base by a system of slavery was fraught with all manner of possibilities that can be suspected of having political purposes no less important to the slave than the intrinsic purposes of indoctrination ostensibly ascribed to such religious conversions. The acclamation of slave fervour within the religious quest was indeed

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157. Eugene Genovese Roll Jordon Roll: The World the Slaves Made p.186 quoted in Orlando Patterson (1982) p.73. This was precisely the message offered by Coleridge in the nineteenth century who thought that slaves should be educated in the responsibilities of freedom by a mixture of doctrine and a protestant work ethic along with a system of buying manumission to practice the self discipline required of a free life.

158. Louis de Verteuil. Trinidad 1856 pp.34-36.

remarkable and Raymond Smith has warned that studies of religion among peoples of African descent in the West Indies must be examined in light of the social, political and economic contexts as well as from within the doctrinal avenues of syncretic integration and symbolic fusions of old and new definitions for continuities of beliefs and ritualistic practices.[159]

Religions that survived this contact, as with other cultural forms spread across a continuum from predominantly heterodox African forms to the politico-ecclesiastical establishments of orthodox Catholicism and Anglicanism. Immigrants and oppressed groups make concessions to an existing socio-cultural reality by constructing superficial links that signal in-group identification. Adopting Christianity was an outward sign of conformity and a way to ease the emotional burden of social ostracism and ridicule.[160] Such religious expressions run the gamut of class as well a as race as establishment church participation sponsored movement up the social ladder through familiarity with conventions within the corridors of power. The Church of England for example conducted members into a relationship with God through careful adherence to 'correct' social form. Similarly, orthodoxy was used to compensate for all lack of gentrification through hereditary lines or education. The church mixed religious affiliation and social requirements for very earthly advancement.

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[159] See Raymond Smith. "Religion in the Formation of the West Indian Society" in Martin Kilson and Robert Rotberg The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays 1976...Religious conversion and practice in the Caribbean needs to be examined in light of the creative strategic character of its adherence during the transition for slavery to free citizenship, eg the hierarchical paternalism, its ethical and sectarian individualism, and participatory enthusiasm. It seems likely that the church enshrined parallel functions for emancipating slaves and bringing them recognition within the dominant structures of the community. See the concluding comments on pp.340-341.

[160] The deep structure and surface structure metaphor would have the deities of Africa assuming the identites of the prophets, saints, angels and archangels of Europe. The superficial performance of the liturgies of Christianity is a gesture interfacing with the symbolic structures from the 'deep' African psyche. The strong statement of a political, conscious conspiratorial religious strategy of dissonance between belief structure and superficial expression is to give freed slaves profound sense and extraordinary powers of duplicity. However, the structuralist emphasis on assimilation and accommodation is to indicate that patterns that connect are at those lacunae of meaning translation. The interstices may be repositories for archetypes undisturbed by rational jus-

According to Edward Seaga (1969) the struggle between the ideologies of Europe and Africa was as bitterly fought as religious wars everywhere because religious beliefs are invested with fundamental tenets of human origins and spiritual prescriptions for understanding modes of being fuse the present with a redeeming prophetic psychic heritage.

> At the root of the whole problem, lies the basic difference of religious thinking: on the one side, stands Christian Monotheism, exclusive, guarded by a jealous God who condemns the worshipers of the Golden Calf and

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tification. Even the intention to accommodate Christianity may be duped by an unconscious dimension.

Caribbeanists have noted that trait theories and the search for direct antecedents of African retentions and survivals of the middle passage are misguided and doomed to failure as they call for a static culture in a cocoon society when in fact there has been a massive upheaval and an aggressive attempt to sabotage African institutions under slavery and the Africa of this century has undergone phenomenal shifts in politico-cultural expressions. Two students of Melville Herskovits, George Eaton Simpson and Peter Hammond suggest that cross referencing contemporary practices across time indicates that "beneath the relatively superficial level of form there is a significant, nonconscious level of psychological function. On this level there is an important basic similarity between varieties of religious practices both throughout West Africa and in the various New World Negro communities." (George E. Simpson and Peter B. Hammond (1960) Discussion. In Vera Rubin (ed) Caribbean Studies: A symposium. Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp.46-63.)

> other idols. One the other side there is African polytheism, all embracing and able to accommodate the Christian Trinity, the Angels and Saints, the Prophets and the Apostles, combining these, however, with the spirits including ancestral dead, and even with the diabolical host. Christianity, in particular Protestant Christianity, because of its exclusiveness and reliance on the truth of doctrine based usually on the Bible alone, has given rise to a multitude of interpretations of Scripture, and thus in turn has promoted the proliferation of a multitude of Christian denominations, none of which have really learnt in the final analysis to co-exist in doctrine. The Revivalist has no such problem. His Gods permit him free intercourse with the available pantheon of spirits.[161]

The religious invasion of Christianity continually found its doctrines cast into visions of Afro-Caribbean genesis where elements of Islamic, African and Christian sources were woven into a systemic theology. The mysteries of origins were compounded by this complex hagiography of saints, prophets, angels and spirits of the dead then further complicated by the guarded mystique surrounding unlettered leaders and practitioners.[162] Yet intertwined in the mysterious articles of faith are all those things that constitute the spiritual and temporal needs of devotees.[163]

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161. Quoted in Gordon Lewis. Main Currents of Caribbean Thought 1983. p.190

162. ...An obeah man had to practise at distancing himself from all things. He had to know joy and pleasure as he knew sorrow and pain, but he must also know how to withdraw himself from its torrent, he must be in total possession of himself, and at the height of infinite joy he must know with all of his senses all that lives and breathes about him... (Ismith Khan. Obeah Man. London: Hutchison, 1964, pp.126-7)

163. Alfred Schutz The Problem of Social Reality The everyday world of common-sense objects and practical acts is the paramount reality in human experience. This is the world in which humans are rooted and from which it is most difficult to escape if s/he wants to survive. Movement between aesthetic religious reality and common-sense reality is a common, if vulgar empiricism essential to human conduct. see Geertz.

> ...Becoming Christian did not , however, mean total severance from their own traditional worship and they continued to serve their deities under Catholic saints' names. Just as the saints carried a European label, they also carried a secret identity under a Yoruba name.[164] Hence, St Michael the Archangel was in fact Ogun. He had performed the same function is the Christian Heaven as in their ancestral home.[165] ...So he was not two identities but one. In the same way, Africans themselves carried two identities. Prohibited by public sanction from carrying indigenous names, the same person officially known as Christiana Williams, ...was also known in the Yoruba community as Osuntoki, daughter of Efulabo.[166]

The authorities in Trinidad were acutely aware of the powers vested in beliefs in supernatural phenomena among the illiterate and semi-literate 'Shouters' and 'Shango' worshipers.[167] Albert Gomes recalled the attempt to suppress the Spiritual Baptists whose services were loud and disturbing to the sensibilities of the local elite:

> Only a deep rooted habit of austere worship, indeed, could have inspired legal proscription of the neo-African cult known as 'Shouters', whose manner of worship appears to proceed from the assumption that God only responds to appeals from his human creatures when they conduct a devastating assault on his auditory

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[164] Melville Herskovits, "African Gods and Catholic Saints in New World Negro Belief" American Anthropologist(1937) pp.635-643

[165] Ogun opened the path for the Gods to visit humankind and stood at the gates with flaming sword. He was the pioneer who discovered the metal to forge the sword and the axe.

[166] Maureen Warner Lewis (1979) p.103

[167] James Anthony Froude.The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses 1892: "In spite of schools and missionaries, the dark connection still maintains itself with Satan's invisible world, and modern education contends in vain with Obeah worship. As it has been in Hayti, so it must be in Trinidad if the English leave the blacks to be their own masters."p.98.

powers with frenetic hymn-chanting, bell ringing and moans and groans.[168] Or was it perhaps the suspicion that sexual rites accompanied the initiation ceremonies of the cult that drove the Puritan conscience of the colonial ruler to senseless intolerance and persecution?[169] Attempted suppression of a group's religion invariably shares the fate of similar attempts, involving equally explosive emotional factors...the object of suppression goes underground. And it is precisely this that happened from 1917, when the ban was first imposed, until the fifties when it was lifted by passage of a legislative amendment.[170]

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168. The 'Shouters' are not alone in these animated voluble performances offering up praise and hymn singing. Where we lived in Curepe a Pentecostal church was nested in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood and some neighbours errected signs "GOD IS NOT DEAF" and "JESUS LOVES PEACE AND QUIET" but over the loudspeaker the preacher would blast his sermon to the 'heathen' who had yet to 'listen to the word of God'. He would proceed at length to have 'all who heard' imagine the fiery furnace of eternal damnation, the sequel to death for all but the 'saved'. The Roman Catholic neighbour on the other side, who never ceased liming with passers-by as he tinkered with wrecks of cars and mowers, was resigned to these frequent assaults (as church activities went on throughout the week and were merely crowned with the Sunday marathon) as the local policeman and not a few of his staff attended the Pentecostal Church there. Besides, 'It have big people' wives and sisters bawlin', 'hallelluyah, praise de Lord' an' catchin' de power in there. My sister-in-law does travel from Rome to Pentecost there within an hour every Sunday, so I not fool enough to complain.'

169. Dinah in Patterson's Children of Sisyphus goes through the revivalist rites of Baptism where Shepherd John enjoins her in this carnal fashion clothed in dense metaphysical imagery. After cleansing and purifications rites, baptism by water and then the tamarind rod burning into her flesh to scourge the evil Melshezdek, the street wise Kingston whore from the Dungle is thrown into orgasmic ecstacy crying 'Jesus!..Oh, sweet father Jesus...' as Shepherd John comes into her. Dinah passes up her cleansed and purified body to be 'the chosen one' the first Daughter of the First Order. pp. 172-173.
..."as the revival idead from the United States and the Britsih Isles...spread over Jamaica, there were prostrations, oral confessions, trances and dreams, prophesying, spirit-seizures, wild dancing, flagellation, and mysterious sexual doings (Curtin 1955)"..."Fowls were sacrificed, and wild songs sung, in the chorus of which the multitude joined. Dancing then began, becoming more and more weird-like in character, until one and another fell exhausted to the ground, when their incoherent utterances were listened to as divine revelation.."(Gardner 1909) quoted by George Eaton Simpson and Peter B. Hammond "Discussion" (1957) p.49.

170. Albert Gomes. Through a Maze of Color. 1974, p.78

Viola-Gopaul Whittington recalled scenes from her childhood where Leader Archie Greenidge in the St.James hills would be taken with the congregation and all the paraphanalia associated with their rites and treated like common criminals in court. The ringing of bells was forbidden which was a significant loss because the sound is believed to heighten spiritual vibrations after the preparation of rigorous mourning and fasting periods. Many of the followers went to prison as they had no money to pay fines.[171]

Given this background, it is not surprising to find that lower-class women in the East Dry River area are more likely to belong to religious cults or have friends who belong to cults while those who belong to educated, middle class neighbourhoods are more likely to be members of established orthodox churches.[172] And there are those who attend different churches to take care of their social needs and obligations to class membership while secretly spiriting away to different areas to take care of the emotional and psychological needs in forms of worship that revolve around the drum dance[173], songs and rhythms that honour those spirits who are called on to possess participants through the dance and sometimes through trance.[174] The orthodox churches do not make links of this psycho-cultural or transcultural quality as West Africa does not figure as an author in their ritualistic involvement or liturgical performance style.[175]

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[171] 171. Viola-Gopaul Whittington "The Baptism" p.11

[172] 172. Andrew Carr (1953) indicated that in 1870, the Rada, Yoruba, Ibo, Congo and Mandingo peoples lived in separate communities in Port of Spain. African freed slaves continued to be settled in Trinidad up until 1855. M.G. Smith Plural Society (1965) noted that more than a 1,000 African immigrants came to Grenada in 1849 and lived in closed communities. And Melville Herskovits (1947) and George Eaton Simpson (1965) noted the link between Shango in East Port of Spain and patterns of West African origins. (Chapter 1)

[173] 173. The Big Drum Dance, the national dance of Grenada and Cariacou finds its way into Shango cult rituals in Trinidad. A fact hardly surprising given the number of immigrants in East Port of Spain from

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these near island neighbours. George Eaton Simpson (1976) pp.291-295. According to M.G. Smith (1965) the Drum Dance is a sign of respect for the dead and a means of avoiding punishment from the spirits of the dead. Throughout the Caribbean the emphasis on the spirits of the dead continuing to interfere in the lives of the living is particularly striking.

[174] Albert Gomes recalled a world that he knew intimately where the obeahman exploited the superstition and romanticism of proletarian and middle class adherents alike, by offering a pharmacopia of solutions to individual problems. From his pharmacy Gomes and his assistant, who developed a genius for this, supplied orders for this (lucrative) 'diabolic commerce' (love potions, confusion powder,'man you must' etc.).pp.86-88. Gomes also suggested that most of the people who came into the pharmacy for such merchandise were practising Catholics but in Trinidad it was difficult to draw the dividing line as they overlapped, being so much alike in the supernatural climate of the island. p.88.

[175] According to Gordon Lewis (1983) speaking of distinctions between the psyche of Europe and the psyche of Africa: The European planter was no Locke or Descarte but the Cartesian categories of thought and behavioral consequences were alive in the enthronement of individualism, private will and a radical separation of faith and will...the general hubris of European man.. were pitted against the African categories of thought. For Cartesian man, knowledge springs from experimentally observed experience; for African man, it springs from faith in cosmologic principles not susceptible to experimentation. The one is a literary tradition; the other, an oral tradition contained in myth, legend and folktale. The one perceives the universe in terms of scientific laws, the other sees it in terms of laws that can only be apprehended by means of therapeutic or redemptive episodes in ritual and ceremony that constitute, as it were, scenarios of the transformation, in essence magical, of personal states. For Cartesian man, life and experience are divided, artificially, into separate compartments: state and church, private will and public obligation, nature and convention, reason and desire. For African man, life and experience are unified in one total domain of knowledge and understanding in which past, present, and future fuse into the awful mystery of things. It is ritual against reason, mythology against science, dialect against the dialectic, and, set within the framework of the Caribbean slave society, people against property. p.196. This distinction could have been made between the Religion and post enlightenment Logical-Empiricism.

Among the women whose conversations I recorded there had been considerable interest in spiritual matters as religious concepts and figures of speech permeate the language and familiarity with the ideological content fashions material for making conversation. Religion is central to understanding or locating meaning in existence itself. It is the prism through which meanings are refracted to give them their distinctive shape and focus. Every woman I spoke with incorporated religious images or appeals to God in routine conversational sequences[176] and identified with a church even in those cases where church attendance was rare. Most women had belonged to several denominations and attended different congregations within these denominations.[177] There was never any mention of being an atheist or agnostic or anything that would indicate the nonexistence of a God or the irrelevance of a God for immediate personal conduct.[178]

The churches represented by the women were Roman Catholic,

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[176] Refer to the sections on Concepts of God and Language for examples and the context in which the speech acts occur.

[177] As Children 64% were either Catholic or Anglican but as adults only 25% remained. Of the adults 67% belonged to Shango and Spiritual Baptist congregations. People are more willing to give their faith as Baptist after the PNM gave its blessing to the church and rumours would have Dr Williams as a member of the flock. Revival meetings, crusades and excursions gathered women from across many different orthodox and heterodox groupings as faith springs eternal from such desperate quarters.

[178] In the census 1980 in the Ward of St Anns, 450 (.5%) women registered as having no religion out of a population of 79,739. Most women registered their religion as Roman Catholic (42%) or Anglican (22%). However, the census figures in their bold print do not tell of the shifting loyalties of believers as "so say and so do" may be as disparate as Catholic "yes" and Shango worship, with visits to Pastor Duncan's Pentecostal healing services.

Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal, Hindu, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh Day Adventist, Moravian and Shango. As indicated in Chapter 5, the map of Port of Spain is littered with churches. But the map does not even begin to represent the true religious landscape as the majority of the women I spoke with attended 'church' in houses and community centres or joined in holy pilgrimages to springs, rivers, waterfalls and the ocean. As one 73 year old woman explained God does not live in church..'I wouldn't have to tell yuh but I don' always go to church. It aren' have no special church for me. A church is a church because God is everywhere. It aren' have no church for me but my religion was Catholic. So everyt'ing dat is done for me is in Catholic.[179] For me a church is a church, understand! Yuh sit down here now an' if yuh want to pray an' t'ing because I don' know when I goin' to church I wouldn' like to tell you...' Vena sings hymns as forms of meditation or spiritual affirmation and prays with her Baptist and Shango neighbours. Hymns are sung to drive off any demonic spirits that might be lurking about. Sonya (32 years) stressed that hymns could be sung to cleanse the mind of fear and elevate the person from any danger. She would not fall victim to an assault while she kept her 'God consciousness'. (The flip-side of this logic would assume that those women who had swelled the ranks of assault victims in the neighbourhood had let down their guard while satan's evil army was on the march).

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[179] By this Vena [illegible] saying that those who bring food, carry her to parties, give her a little 'bread' are Catholic. She also had help from the church in gathering furniture for her little apartment after the fire destroyed all her belongings. In this way 'everyt'ing dat is done for me is in Catholic'.

Among the poor on this neighborhood, preachers and core figures in hierarchies of ecclesiatical office, jockey for survival among those who understand the qualities of charisma, a magnetic personality, ingenuity and that ability to advocate a theology that reaches into the psycho-emotional corpus of their flock.[180] Recruitment is fiercely competitive as the spiritual quest like other quests, is endless. The eclecticism is illustrated by Pleasant (73yrs) whose family came from St Vincent during the "William War" (WWI) of 1914. Pleasant was Catholic but she recognizes that different churches have specializations in various ministries performed.[181] The medical doctor (cast in the same cauldron as other healers, competes for a corner in this market) has no medicine for 'de heat fire' put on her, so it is no good 'wastin' money on doctor' to recover her sight. 'Pastor Duncan, he is a healer. With people, send dem to him sick an' he heal yuh. But I was a Catholic an' all my family is Catholic..but de priest can pray but he can' heal yuh. I have to take life cool....Thank God for life...'[182] So Pleasant is taking her money and her blind eyes to Pastor Duncan. 'He works wid de moon but he pull over de head 'prayer for me. Next Wednesday...de moon will come out to help me take out dis fire'. Like the Mystic Masseur, the Pentecostals have scooped the faith healing market with the extraordinary popularity of Pastor Duncan.[183]

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[180] Malinowski Magic, Science and Religion (1948) Religion helps people to endure "situations of emotional stress...Hope cannot fail nor desire deceive".(p.67) In most religions, affliction and suffering is glorified and affirms human inadequacy and incompleteness. Faith allows the poor to endure with a cosmic guarantee.
Max Weber's typology in The Sociology of Religion (1963) emphasizes the distinct leadership styles. And Glenda Simms illustrated how the charismatic character is emulated by popular leaders seeking authentication from the bulk of the Black populace in the Caribbean.

[181] According to Herskovits (1937) In African religion each deity has specialized priests, societies, and cult centres. It is not inconsistent therefore, to seek out specialists from across the ecclesiatical spectrum of the various magico-religious arts. See George Eaton Simpson, 1976, p.292.

Another reason for the Pentecostal healer's popularity among certain quarters is that Spiritual Baptists are loath to admit illness within their structure as frailty of body is linked with a spiritual malady. To address the problem would mean having to fast and to enter a mourning tract. The desire for advancement in the hierarchy of the church results in the ambitious Baptist seeking help anonymously so as not to stain the record or spiritual worth.[184]

The Spiritual Baptists

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[182] Albert Gomes tells a story of the 3 Dorah's where one diagnosed by doctors to have malignant malaria was taken from the hospital as the family was convinced that someone was 'working obeah'. Medical science would be of no avail as the only way to counteract the workings of one malign force was to employ a more powerful obeah practitioner. Dorah's obeahman was defeated, so Dorah died. Through a Maze of Color 1974, pp90-92.

[183] V.S. Naipaul's Mystic Masseur (1957) "Ganesh found himself a mystic when Trinidad was crying out for one. That time is now past. But some people haven't realized it and today in odd corners of Trinidad there is still a backwash of penurious mystics. Providence indeed seemed to have guided Ganesh. Just as it told him when to take up mysticism, so it told him when to give it up." (Ganesh graduated from mystic masseur to politician) p.206.

[184] Stephen Glazier *Ibid* (p.62) notes this same pattern in his study.

Stephen Glazier's (1983) study of the Spiritual Baptists in the Curepe community indicated that the central unifying tenets of the Spiritual Baptists were mourning rites and the rites of Baptism. Like so many grass roots religious groupings, the Baptists believe in a hierarchy of spirits and the closer the connexions are to Shango, the more emphasis there is on spirit possession and incantation. There is also a pantheistic concept associated with the land, trees, rocks and bodies of water, where purification rites become necessary before Baptist construction workers can proceed with 'disturbing' the earth.

The rituals of believers are divided into broad categories that connect the human person with the spiritual psyche of the trinity. The image of God the Father appeals to the mind because of the association with creative powers, God the Son with the body because Jesus appeared in human form and and was a living oracle, and God the Holy Ghost appeals to the spiritual quest and is accessed through dreams, visions and extrasensory perceptions. The connections with Christian rituals of the crucifixion and communion are deliberately diminished because of negative connotations with notions of human sacrifice and cannibalistic images surrounding any celebration through eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ.[185]

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[185] This de-emphasis is a striking departure from the orthodox Catholic and Anglican churches where stained glass windows, statues and the architecture of the churches themselves show the sign of the cross. The communion service is a solemn ritual of sustenance and renewal for the faithful.

The Baptist and Shango worshipers also include rituals of animal sacrifice that are not part of the orthodox church's services. Such ceremonies are secret and attendance is selective.

Many aspects of the Spiritual Baptist faith are reminiscent of syncretic belief structures of West Africa, particularly the Yoruba. The separation of the trinity is similar to the multiple concept of soul where the *vital-soul* comes from God and returns at death. The *personality soul* returns to the land of the ancestors and may be re-incarnated through children in the lineage; it visits the living for good or ill and finally returns to the ancestors or 'living-dead'. The *shadow-soul* remains in the world after death to observe funeral rites and may stay indefinitely. It is this soul that is called the *duppy* or ghost. It can become angry and vindictive, or it may try to take a loved one with it, particularly a young child where the duppy belonged to a grandmother that cared for her grans. Thus, in three days the vital soul is resurrected to God, while the shadow ghost stays around the house for the 9 days of the funeral rites. If all is satisfactory and peace reigns then in 40 days the soul returns to ancestors in the African tribe of the dead.[186]

Emphasis in the Spiritual Baptist faith is placed on the biblically enshrined words of God as written and the therapeutic accessing of the divine through spirit possession, dreams and visions. For the church to survive it must be directly connected with believers, as the church, like many of it's members has no tradition of stockpiling real estate or funds and being so intimate in character the church accommodates the qualities and

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186. See A.B. Ellis. The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa 1894; John Mbiti. African Religions and Philosophy 1969

needs of those who do the work of this church. The church is literally the people who identify themselves as members coming together to keep alive the conventions. Some women preferred smaller gatherings as this allows greater possibilities for advancement up the church hierarchy.

> As this new faith came to poor illiterate people, who were timorous from the great anguish they suffered, and found release for their pent-up sorrow and were happy, if even for a brief period as their pathway was never an easy one. They had accepted this as a way of life. Many never realized the wonderful power of divine mind revealing in them, they could not read nor write to put their experiences on paper, yet miracles, similar to what Jesus did, they were doing.[187]

According to one Spiritual Baptist, Viola-Gopaul Whittington, the Orissha was the force that gave religious leaders their original platform. Anthropologists cannot agree on the direct links with Africa or Christianity but those 'called' by the 'inner voice' to praise houses, palaises and chapelles to practice their faith have conventions that are products of a varied spiritual bonding.[188]

> ....Just being with them in their 'temple' was a poignant reminder of the extent to which the more conventional forms of Christian worship are animated by castrated concepts. A degutted and asexual imagery dictates the norms that are unctuously deployed to the worshipping assembly by personified self-idealization. You do not take your body to worship. You leave it at home or discard it at the church door. It is, therefore, a ghost that worships, albeit a holy one. In the Shouters' temple body and soul reunited sang and enjoyed the glory of the Lord. The animal had not been

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~~187.~~ Viola-Gopaul Whittington. History and Writings of the Spiritual Baptist p.11

188. See M.G. Smith "The African Heritage in the Caribbean" pp.34-45. and George Eaton Simpson and Peter B Hammond's "Discussion" pp.45-59. in Vera Rubin Caribbean Studies: A Symposium 1957

> left tethered at the door. And you didn't feel part of an ostentatious but futile lament that we all have to die - and of a metaphysical strategy built upon the belief that perhaps we could bribe ourselves out of the inescapable obligation by dying as much as possible while we are still alive.[189]

The Spiritual Baptists arrange their services so that the "cool" sequences precede the "hot" crescendos linked with manifestations of the Holy Ghost. The shouting is believed to "trump in the Spirit". It is generally assumed that the "cool" portions of the service come from the European background while the "hot" parts reflect an African Heritage. It is the "hot" sections of the service that are experienced as alien to Europeans who have attended these churches. More than half the service is given over to hymn singing, prayer, bible reading and the sermon from the paramount leader. However, the rituals of worship require a lot more physical attitudes that standing, sitting and kneeling whilst continually facing the front.[190]

Trumping or labouring the spirit (spirit possession ritual behaviour) is practiced by people who have the belief that spirits of the saints, prophets, deities of Ogun or ancestors manifest themselves through their person in the dance or trumping. Leonard

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[189]. Albert Gomes Through a Maze of Color 1974,p.170

[190]. Tee in Merle Hodge's Crick crack Monkey "Mass continued to strain my resources. At school I was taking in the catechism pages at a time, and Auntie Beatrice said I was to be christened into the Catholic Church. But for the moment crossing myself and genuflecting and bowing and kneeling and rising and sitting at the appointed cues while keeping track of the stream of murmuring which I was assured was pointed in the little book I held in front of me, presented a challenge of the most terrifying order....the whole atmosphere seemed to be one of reproof, of trial; it was as if the whole church, people and building, were coldly regarding me, waiting to pull me up when I fell out of line." pp.77-78.

Barret observing spirit possession in Jamaica said that he had seen women over 70 years of age relaxed and attending to normal duties after trumping vigorously for close to an hour. Albert Gomes observed a similar ceremony among Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad and remarked that after the flutter of the possession state, the women were tranquil and refreshed. The adept were only distinguished by there being a tendency for the trance-like features to remain with them in a mild form.[191] There is general agreement in Anthropological literature that the therapeutic effects of this form of worship are valuable to mental well-being among practitioners.

A sexual division in worship practices exists in that women are excluded from the area to the rear of the alter (except when they pass a broom or mop), and they must address the congregation kneeling at the centre post, while men speak from the front of the church.[192] As the higher ranking church posts are exclusively male, there are many key functions that women cannot perform.[193] Women in the church are central in that they are in the majority position and they service and maintain the Baptist faithful. Some posts in the church are gender specific as it is women predominate as mothers, teachers and nurses, while men become captains, shepherds and leaders. And frequently the paramount mother is the wife of the paramount leader. The ambitious Baptist woman will seek out a church where the paramount leader is single. It was common to hear the attitude that the church is for women, especially older women. Attendance figures would indicate that this is so, but the actual decision making posts at the pinnacle of the church pyramid are in the hands of men.

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[191] Leonard Barret The Sun and the Drum 1976 p.105

[192] Most women direct their religious attention to the centre pole, while men focus their attention to the front of the church. Men usually speak from behind a pulpit alongside or directly facing the altar. In some churches all males sit to the right of the altar and all females sit to the left, while in urban areas, mixed seating is common. Stephen Glazier "Notes" p.144.

[193] See Stephen Glazier *Ibid* p.42

Gwen (48) has been a member for almost 20 years and her family before her. Like many women, being a Baptist was central to her identity in the Beetham and she can be seen in her uniform walking up to 9th Street to attend to her faith. Gwen, who is also known as Patsy, has worn different colours. "For prayers, we mostly wear de uniform. Like if we have a mission...all different places. Like if we walk waterfall dis Sunday we might go Maracas..might go up. I does wear brown. For every different clothes yuh wear is a different t'ing. Well I use' to wear blue an' white. Dat was de firs' uniform. Den after yuh get pure white an' after I come up to brown. Well after brown I ain' change my uniform again. I stay right dere." The leaders "dem use a black gown."

The church is an organization where certain women I spoke to gain credibility and gain postings that give them a a sense of achievement, recognition and the ability to wield authority within the structure. For the market vendors, domestic employees, project workers, service sector employees, seamstresses and those caring for grandchildren, the church is another system for status seeking in a society where there is little hope of economic advancement.[194] Roger Bastide (1971) noted that there is a "passion" for titles and rank within the New World Black religions.[195] In the Baptist church the postings nest the functions necessary for orderly conduct of church operations and rituals. A paramount leader and paramount mother could perform all the functions of a young church as each rank contains the duties of lower offices. At the end of proscription in 1953 Albert Gomes would put this emphasis on rank into the colonial perspective and also show how the politician manipulates Afro-cultural religion to advance the march towards independence:

> What matter that the leaders of the Shouters entertained ambitions of becoming self-appointed bishops and archbishops. One recognized this to be just another manifestation of the art of emulation of what was white and foreign by a psychologically subjugated people. For myself, I thought the idea delightfully intriguing - for as self-appointed bishops and archbishops they would be personified lampoons on the pompous archetypes frequently unloaded on our soil, clerical colonial blimps dramatically uplifted from the cozy obscurity of some provincial parish in England to become moral and social arbiters among the heathen wards overseas. ... That the Shouters could in turn produce a tailor-made burlesque of such basically travestied Christianity provided a vicarious retribution for one like myself...[196]

The emphasis that women bring to the church is the primacy of the religious experience, particularly mourning and Baptismal preparations. Stephen Glazier noted that women's contributions were never acknowledged directly in church matters as men do not attribute to women the capacity for inspiration. However, during prayer meetings, it was noted that prayers for enlightenment were often thickly silted with ideas that might inspire paramount leaders to act in certain directions. Similarly, in illumination sessions the higher ranking members are last to enter discussions and so the paramount leader is able to draw on the foregone statements. All those who aspire to high ranks are expected to offer illumination. Women take mourning rites very seriously as the visions and dreams revealed through them are interpreted by the *provers* and *leaders*. Advancement, according to Gwen "is according to how many times yuh mourn...from de degree an' times yuh mourn. It' jus' like at school, yuh pass from one stage to de nex'. Now yuh go an' yuh mourn de first time yuh might come out in pure white, right? Yuh go back an' mourn de second time an' yuh come out wid a little brown. Yuh might come out in a different section of life before your degrees build up."

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[194] Vittorio Lanternari The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults 1963.

[195] Roger Bastide African Civilizations in the New World pp.29-30

[196] Albert Gomes Through a Maze of Color 1974, p.170.

The embourgeiosment of the Baptist faith during the boom years and the courtship between the church and the PNM has been accompanied by a burgeoning of high ranking posts that have much to do with status and prestige and little to do with the day to day work of the church. Viola-Gopaul Whittington laments that this process is separating the the higher ranking officials from the ground of *sisters* and *brothers* newly baptized in the faith.

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> It would be well for our Baptists' members to turn around again and find leaders as in the past, for then, there were no Archbishops, nor Bishops in a Baptist Praise House, where the sound came from Mother Earth. There were true, true leaders who put duty before self and aggrandizement, following closely behind the greatest avatar of all times. Let the Mother Abbessess and Superiors give way to the real spiritual mothers who are really mothers to their spiritual children and deserve to wear the symbolic apron, which hid their children's shame and disgrace. The armies of captains, who can bring their spiritual barge into port, the Nurses, Pointers, Teachers, the Warriors and Shepherds, Elders and Patriarchs, all toilers in the vineyard who never got weary, they took their obligations seriously and were wholly committed to do the work of God, the great I am, who works through his angels and saints. Those workers of the past never sought titles nor publicity but worked in silence with humility which in the faith now, is on the way out.[197]

Most of the Baptist women I spoke with were functionally illiterate and so they relied very heavily on 'inspiration' as Vio (62) pointed out to me that words like 'memory 'and 'rote learning' suggested human effort instead of seeing the cleansed and purified person as an instrument of God. I asked Gwen how long it was before she could take part in exaltation as first she had to learn to testify, verse by verse. "Yuh know, some people have quick brains an' some people are slow to learn but really I din' know to preach off de bible. I learn to preach off..verse by verse... Even in de prayers an' all o' dis I know to pray by hearin' at church exaltation an' hearin' other people higher dan me prayin'...I does learn." So for Gwen it is vitally important to monitor her life around the church so that her body is prepared to "manifest the spirit of God". "Yuh have to prepare. Now if yuh goin' to church, like yuh have to pray an' fast an' t'ing so dat yuh would be pure an' clean...an' keep away from yuh husband an' t'ing nuh. So yuh would be able to go to church, clean an' pure."

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[197] Viola-Gopaul Whittington History and Writings of the Spiritual Baptist. (Not dated 1985? p.14

For the devout a spiritual dialogue is sustained through the disciplined body and prayerful life style. Asceticism, frugality and purification through fasting is accessible to poor women and elevated as a sign of piety. So poverty is recast as virtue and used to emphasize nearness to God. Many of the older women said prayers of a morning when the rest of the household was quiet in slumber. Gwen insists on prayer, "If I never use' to pray I don' know what would of become of me today. ...I use' to be dere catchin' misery, trouble... but yuh see prayers? Prayers is all. ..I use' to cry and say 'Oh Lord who will help meh. My father dead an' I don' have nobody at all... Oh God, send some soul, send some soul for meh to help meh. Provide a bread for meh when de day comes for meh nuh.'... Now I feel so downcouraged that I would have break heart. I sit down by m' sister an' start t' cry....I had to talk m' problems to God, just sit down on this chair here an' then I leave an' lie on m' sister' bed an' drop asleep. T'rough de middle of de night I dreamin' I went to school eh...in de dream I went to school an' de teacher give meh two sums to do. I tellin' her I can' do de sums 'cause I don' know de sums. Teacher said, 'Well allright since yuh can' do de sums I would pass yuh from here... from one standard to a next standard.

Chil'ren develop ~~as~~ school to over.' I say ' I had no lunch yuh know teacher.' She go an' buy some biscuit' an' dat what she tellin' meh. As I now was goin' to de trap I see a saint an' he send...an' when I look t'rough, de saint was Blessed Martin de Porres...When I go in de parlour I see de saint come more bigger an' as de saint come more bigger, I call for some biscuit. He give meh t'ree biscuit. When I comin' back t'rough de bush I see a little man big so. He run out t'rough de bush an' he call meh. When I look backwards he say, 'Well I's yuh husband, I comin' to meet yuh...go in front an' I behind, I comin' to meet yuh.' And yuh know, de very same week as m' dream dat I said here, I pick up wid dat mister what I have here. We married in January 27. So yuh see, dreams is really true."

Women had different saints and prophets to intercede for them when they called their names "St Martin de Porres, dat is a Black Negro saint. I always use' to pray to St Martin. I must pray to St Anthony de bread giver she (her spiritual mother) tell meh, an' ask him for help. But I always prefer St Martin 'cause dat is de onliest two saints I does pray to. So dat is why he appear to me heself in de dream...everyt'ing dat I want I does pray to God an' call his name...I does get it."

Miss Elizabeth (51) use to say that she didn't like what she saw of Baptists, "I's a person dat use' to say well I don' like it. What! When I passin' by de road an' I see dose people preachin' an' gettin' on I use' to say I ain' join no Baptist. But to be trut'ful, I am not goin' to mourn...dat ain' in my head at all. Yuh see meh, to mourn an' all dat kin' a' t'ing I am not in dat, not now. Probably when I get a little bit older but right now, I like to go to my little fete an' t'ing....What! Yuh see meh an' me' jewelries an' t'ing. I still have m' young woman but at Independence when dey have deir little pilgrimage, I will go to dat. Anytime yuh join dose t'ings yuh must not go nowhere...excursion or carnival. I am not goin' to mourn. When yuh go an' yuh do dese kin' a' t'ings yuh suppose to give to it.[198] Yuh have to live up to it. Anytime yuh see people walkin' along de road wid dey long dress don' t'ink dey is crazy..dey have to do what dey have to do! ... I does always say...I don' like dat. ..My husband din' want meh to baptize yuh know, but I was sick." It was while Miss Elizabeth was sick that she had her vision that called on her to be baptized. "When I tell yuh I was sick...Yeah, when I get up in de mornin' like if somebody beat meh, here, here, here. I was very weak. I couldna' hold up. For de whole week I sick, sick an' I still givin' an' say no, no, no, no, I ain'. An' I wouldn' give in I say I not joinin' dat eh. Another night again I have a dream. I was in de grave an' a short brown skin man come an' hold me. I was in de grave, yeahs. T'ree people went wid me an' my dream tell me to go an' baptize. An' I describe her (spiritual mother) de man. She tell me dat is

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[198] Baptism and mourning rites are expensive. Set rates vary from $120 to $250 in Curepe, and depending on the reputation of the leader, may cost as much as $1,000. Candidates are expected to provide food for themselves and their supervisors...Mourners themselves undergo periods of fasting, while leaders, mothers, and nurses eat 3-4 meals a day. And candles are to be provided for the duration of the rites.

Ezekiel. An' so I went an' I get baptize. De man who baptize me was a short brown skin man yuh know... An' it don' worry me again. I don' get sick an' t'ing again. Yuh see, sometimes when yuh get dose callin's an' yuh don' do it, it make yuh sick right?" Gwen (48) explained about Ezekiel, "dat is de man..of de body. He does wear black. Yeah, dat is de death man. ..As long as she see de grave, dat is Ezekiel. She (Elizabeth) come out of de grave...well dat very good. Dat mean she was gettin' better."

While the belief structure and religious practice is mighty in importance to the Spiritual Baptists, another role played by the women is the vanguard against a fundamentalist morality. When Rose displaces another Baptist woman by moving in with Jan's former common law conjugal partner, she is publicly denounced. The Baptist women colluded to make Rose's actions the subject of their scorn. So there was collective action among women to censor the actions of another woman in the name of an order ordained beyond the realm of the street or neighbourhood. This vanguard for 'God' acted as though their means were justified by their righteousness. The neighbour is particularly bothersome: "Yes she always burnin' t'ings. Dat is why I ain' have dem baptist an' dem on dis street is baptists, uh. I mean, dey hate meh... Dey don' really mix wid me in deir pot. From de time I come here I go t'rough a time of my life where everybody use' to be aroun' here. It is God dat did stayed wid me...dat is why I does be still here. Yeah, dey ain' easy. T'ink about torment...dey start on m' daughter...Dey spit on she, all kin' o' t'ing dey sayin' yes....'Roun' here dey ain' easy no. ...I jus' leave dem. Dey use' to pelt m' wid water an' t'row ...Dey use to be interferin' wid me when I pass in de road... An' I come an' I say, look yuh see meh, I end up goin' to de station..Police come an' warn dem."

Sandra (29) also became a Baptist and has used the faith to manourver towards a monogamous relationship with her friending partner. When she first became Baptized she stayed away from dances and it was very quickly apparent that her partner was "getting in" with a younger girl. Sandra played her cards right and had the Baptist women censor the young girl, whose mother was also a church member. In very little time, Sandra was installed in the house again. Thus the church crusades for moral causes in a way that is particularly effective.

Perhaps even more effective is the unofficial tendency for Baptists to hire other Baptists or recommend them for positions if anything becomes available. Helping members gain employment is vital to the church coffers.

Constructions of 'God' in Women's Voices.

The anthropomorphic character of God assumes that a symbiotic relationship exists between the nature of God and the imagination of those who know "Him". A peculiar God is adored by a peculiar people. Thus, there appears to be some truth in the statement: *If there is some doubt about whether God created the Negro, there* *is absolutely no doubt that the Negro created God.*

A Spiritual Baptist woman believed that Slavery was part of a cosmic plan or the law of Karma where ancestors from Africa were taken like the Israelites taken out of Egypt under Moses before them. History is cyclic and the continuous repetitions ensures that "there is nothing new under the sun". Slavery was the exodus that forced Africans from a multitude of tribes into the wilderness of the New World. Hence the popular slogan of the Black Power days, *After Israel, Africa*. The Black exodus is based on notions of original sin and enslavement in a theology of Black redemption. Syncretic Afro-Christian religious forms have been constructed on the fundamental cosmic metaphor of enslavement, slavery and manumission. Thus, the religion fashioned on the metaphor of a Roman slave order is recast in an identical role eighteen hundred years later. Thus, history may not have repeated itself in truth, but merely lingered.[199]

The slave masters were unaware of this connection with ancient Egypt. And like the Egyptians who embalmed their pharoh's bodies and faces in cloths for the duration of mystical journeys, the bands are placed on the neophyte Baptist in the mourning tract. Revelation has used mediums to connect with entities of ancient Egyptian cults to search for truth that came through essenes to identify with slaves.

> ...the mediums must have received results, because they shouted under the new force or Power, or whatever you would call it; they healed the sick, cast out demons,

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[199] See Orlando Patterson *Ibid* 1983 pp.66-77

> spoke in tongues, had the gift of revelations and utterances; they fasted, mourned, signed numerous hieroglyphics on the bands of pilgrims and around them. They even raised the dead, those who were illumined after three days were raised to life.
> ... Jesus was thought to be an Essene... One writer expressed the view that the Essenes were a local lodge in Egypt dating back to Thutmose III and Amenhotep IV, in Greece this lodge was known as Teurepeuti, yet in another country as the Sons of Zadox.
> ... John the Baptist was an Essene and belonged to a commune in Qumran...[200]

What distinguishes the beliefs of Spiritual Baptists from the Yaroubas is that Jesus is recognized as an essene and the symbol of God consciousness whose blood sealed the pact with the Heavenly Father to end blood sacrifices under Mosaic Law. The saraca or feast on blood sacrifices of the Yaroubas (Shango) was replaced by emphasis on baptismal and mourning rites. The low ground of sorrow bears the symbolism of embalming the carnal body and making way for the spiritual body and revelation. The mourning tract is a pilgrimage; "a period that Jesus went through as did Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and John on the Isle of Patmos and other great prophets whose visions have lived through the ages." The link with the Pharohs of Egypt preparing for the journey beyond death and Jesus's entombment and resurrection is repeated like the cycles of birth,life and death of Karma.[201]

The God of the Spiritual Baptists is inextricably linked with the metaphor of slavery and the key concepts of justification, redemption and reconciliation where the sinner is not emancipated into 'freedom', but dies anew in the messianic personage of Christ and delivered into a unifying master concept of Pauline Christianity. Thus, spiritual freedom becomes divine enslavement. And the symbiosis of this contradiction between life and death, good and evil, slavery and emancipation is bridged in a dialectic relationship between the 'gift' of manumission from the divine master. Manumission is never earned or paid for, so much as it is a gift of the master. The faithful are 'saved' by being 'chosen' for 'redemption' into 'eternal life'. These are metaphors of 'right' and power; absolute power.

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[200]. Viola Gopaul-Whittington. History and Writings of the Spiritual Baptists pp.6-7.

[201]. Viola Gopaul-Whittington *Ibid* p.9.

Omens and a Philosophy of Common Sense

A cursory review of Slave codes and the progress of amelioration is littered with records that reveal that the severest punishments done to slaves were reserved for practising obeah and voodoo.[202]

> Slave Law of 1760 (Jamaica): Any Negro or other slave who shall pretend to any Supernatural Power and be detected in making use of any Blood, Feathers, Parrot's Beaks, Dog's teeth, Alligator's Teeth, Broken Bottles, Grave Dirt, Rum, Egg Shells, or any other materials related to the practice of Obeah or Witchcraft in Order to delude and impose on the Minds of others Shall upon Conviction there of before 2 magistrates and 3 free holders suffer Death or Transportation.[203]

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[202] See V.S. Naipaul's Loss of El Dorado 1969 pp.156-157)

[203] See Leonard Barret The Sun and the Drum: African Roots in Jamaican

Much has been written about superstitions with respect to the dead and the use of necromancers and conjurers of both sexes to rid oneself of spirits and apply spells and charms to cure illnesses or dispose of an opponent. Thomas Atwoods travelling in Jamaica in 1971 wrote:

> The superstitions with respect to their dead are truly ridiculous, for they suppose that the deceased both eat and drink in their coffins; and for that purpose, they put therein articles of both; together with a pipe and tobacco, and such things as they know the deceased was fond of in his life time. Moreover, at their funerals they believe the dead have the power of compelling them to carry it to the grave, in which road it likes, to shew its resentment to those who have offended it.[204]

Every living thing shows us hidden knowledge through signs and omens - To missionaries in the Caribbean these beliefs were regarded as superstitions which needed to be eradicated, to the folklorist they were part of the folk, to the 'educated' they are difficult obstacles to any appreciation of Cartesian dualism and contemporary science.

In the belief structure of the East Dry River (and elsewhere) the distinctions between the spatio-temporal realities of empirical perceptions is overlaid with a metaphysical palpable reality where the living are haunted by the dead and the thaumaturgic spirit world casts a shadow that was labelled as *superstition* to embrace our meagre understanding of the intricacies of local perceptions. According to Albert Gomes the people of this area did

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Folk Traditions 1976 p.74.

[204] Thomas Atwood (1791) in Abrahams and Szwed After Africa 1983 p.20

not live in the same psychological climate as those who had inherited the renaissance, the enlightenment and logical positivist forerunners of modern science. The split was not made between the mind and the body or the notions of causality based on chance or randomness in nature. Beneath the fragile crust of 'respectability' lies a world anchored in animism, heterodoxy and pantheism. Albert Gomes describes the phenomenal world of the hills of Diego Martin, Laventille or Maraval as essentially different from the reality of contemporary western psychology, "you have stepped out of one age into another... In this area both the nights and the minds are dark."[205]

The maid would confidently pray on her rosary to chase the *soucoyants* who would shed their skins to become fire balls in the night to suck blood and leave the victim dry, pale and 'drained', without ever knowing that a Christian God had been offended. When a baby is born, a black bangle or bracelet called a *jet* is placed on the infant to ward off the *mal yeux* or the spirits of the dead who may want to carry off the baby. Hester insisted that my daughter wear the jet that she brought to the hospital as soon as the child was born. At one point I thought that the beads may scratch my baby and so I removed it. This was met with a great deal of consternation by Hester who insisted on singing hymns to keep the baby safe while the jet was not being worn. It was some relief to her that the baby was close to the Pentecostal church where members were quite active and hymns were broadcasted over loud speakers. The Pentecostal brethren were so loud that we were able to hear every word of the sermons and hymns from any corner of our house. Thus, what was "noise pollution" to my ears, was added protection for my baby from departed spirits or "the devil" and all the forces of evil in our midst.

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[205] Albert Gomes Through a Maze of Color 1974 p.85

Albert Gomes told one story about a Baptist domestic who died of pneumonia after a mid-night baptism during the proscription period in Trinidad. And following Dorah's death the Gomes' infant so loved by this maid, began to scream at midnight and wake the entire household. This problem persisted until the family carried out the advice of an elderly woman who told them to speak with "Dorah" and tell her to leave the child in peace with the parents who love the child also. And although Gomes insisted that coincidence is more likely than supernatural intervention, from that night onwards the child no longer screamed at midnight.

Mental and physical health is at the mercy of the ghosts and spirits that abound and thus those "called" to the healing profession (and "callings" are not exclusively the domain of herbal medicine diviners in East Port of Spain) have to be morally upright, trustworthy, willing to serve and have a conscience about fees to be charged for so fundamental a service among believers.[206]

Ritualized herbal procedures are in high demand in a constituency where the seer is the instrument of divining purification and warding off evil visitations that so vex the suffering clients. Those called are both apprenticed in the values and names of herbs and rituals that can intervene to aid the powers of well-being, but the essential aspect is not learnt or studied but made manifest through the divine power of the true Healer.

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[206] See John Mbiti African Religions and Philosophy New York: Praeger 1969 pp.166-167.

When I asked Vena (73 yrs) about her ulcerated leg she replied: " Dat was an abcess. ...I could remember when I was in de market an' a woman give one lash once, what! Right dere on dis instep an' she never look back....Gone like she was wise, never said sorry or nothin'...Dey had sent her a profesy to do dat an' I didn' take dat for anyt'ing... Time after time a lump came out de same place where she did mash meh, a lump came out dere wid blue blood an' a lump did grow an' den it move, it move, it move, it move... time to time an it would stay an' when yuh see it reaches dere it burst into a sore. I see my royal wid dat sore an' dat time I was in de cetntre.. Oh madam, I see trouble. From dat time I always gettin' a real heaviness in dat foot for a long time since. But God help meh I get better....De t'ing dat I use to be in to walk from de centre to de health office was pain." Vena is aware that being diabetic has something to do with her ulcerated leg not healing, but for her the real cause is cosmological and thus cured by God in her case.

Miss fielders and Mistress Mary both work as faith healers within this community and thei basic belief is that illnesses and accidents are caused by spirit possession or interferences of different kinds. Thus, when Miss Fielders "draws out" a spirit using a burning candle within a glass bottle while she says silent prayers, a healing process is thought to be in progress. So while I thought that the candle expired when the oxygen in the jar was depleted, Miss Fielders concluded that the candle had been extinguished when the spirit filled the jar. This was a very limited example of the way a phenomenon is displaced in a cultural matrix that reveals very different images of what is real for members.

John Lang refuses to eat from Rose's pot as he is afraid of the possibility of being influenced by whatever is 'put' in the food that caused his son to fall for this young woman Rose who deposed Jan and three of Lang's grandchildren. Young men are warned by their mothers to avoid eating food that is offered by young women of their acquaintance as they may 'put somet'ing' in the food to control their affections and trap them into marriage. C.L.R. James' Minty Alley provides many incidents where omens are suspected of playing major roles in the outcome of activities in everyday life. The middle class Mr. Haynes is naive about such things and so "the obvious" is forever being explained to the learned young civil servant:

> 'What? You a Creole and don't know these things? Mr.Haynes, you are a young man and should take my words to heart. You has to be careful what you eats and where you eats it. If you is visitin' a house and makes you'self very familiar in the place, and then doesn't show marriage intentions, they puts a little thing in you' food, and I tell you, you never gets away. Whatever was you' previous intentions you finds you'self married. And is so the nurse catch Mr.Benoit, I'll bet my bottom dollar.'[207]

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207. C.L.R. James. Minty Alley (1936) 1971, p.108.

AFTERWORD

The lifestyles of the women with whom I spoke in The Beetham Housing Estate, John John and Piccadilly Street in East Port of Spain reveal a considerable variety of experiences and adaptive strategies or styles of coping with the overwhelming inevitability of crises that prey on poverty. A fundamental cultural repertoire appears to have been deposited into contours of female discourse. These women do not live as isolates from the mainstream of society within straightjackets of marginalized types, but they reveal distinct cultural alternatives that have been fashioned for them within ascriptive clusters or else they have created for themselves within the perennial concerns of social membership and pattern maintenance. Their repertoire of experiences and the enduring sequences in the fashioning of their lives ought to be understood along with the processes that bring women into the orbit of a meaningful and intimately sympathetic or responsive psychology that is emergent and intrinsic to the life-worlds that they articulate.

It is important that a socio-genetic psychology avoid the process of condemning any class of persons to straitjackets of stereotypical traits while at the same time exploring characteristic styles of conduct and arbitrary distinctions or patterns of human social arrangements. In this endeavour the social-historical context or the milieu in which all social acts are displaced is imbued with signifying character like the actors so engaged. Where, for example, a majority of women are engaged in the informal sector of the economy and know family life without the primary bonds being based on conjugal ties it is alienating to proceed with assumptions based on middle class norms of a nuclear family type with ideals based on notions of sentiment and affection. Similarly, a psychology that assumes individual autonomy or individualism and a process of self actualization would ignore the communal significance of being-in-relation to others, being-for-others and negotiating a life course within local expectations of mutual involvement around issues of interdependence especially were children and the elderly are concerned. Genderic distinctions here are well documented. Where the religious beliefs and group membership within heterodox communities of spiritual practice are at variance with mainstream orthodoxy it would be implausible to adopt interpretation schemes or methods of intervention that are narrowly defined from within Judeo-Christian constructs especially where these definitions are overlaid by a white Anglo-Saxon protestant ethic.

Theories for a psychology among the poor and the oppressed need not condemn all those who are poor and alienated from mainstream society to a new level of sameness. The social construction of poverty and an interest in the culture that is sustained among the poor is infused with peculiarities as distinct as the history that each human being inherits. While culture is something beyond individual psychology, it is as inescapable as the symbolic world that each person mediates from within. It is the primacy of symbolism that makes communication plausible and any sense of self know-able. However, where historically, a white bourgeoisie has paved the ways of power relations the cultural mirrors held up to reflect the definitions of an ethnically distinct culture of poverty through institutions of law, religion, education and government, has produced images which may well be distorted along lines of self interest and self legitimation. The transactions of power are caricatured this way while the culture of poverty throws up stereotypes as inflexible and inescapable as the boundaries erected by ideological imperatives and the hegemonic claims so defined. In other words, the conceptual world is imbued with perceptions that cannot be divorced from patterns of dominance and distortions inherent in an ideology of class maintenance, patterns of misogyny or genderic distinctness and ethnocentric biases.

The problem for a psychology of women in East Port of Spain is not a simple one as distortions of the discourse are linked with the historical imagination engaged in the effort of uncovering an emergent psychological theory. Components of the discourse have been drawn from a history or European historiography where female slaves were silent and described by others with their own peculiar interests. We know very little about individual slave women and attempts to know about the slave as opposed to the institution of slavery or the world of the 'inner plantation' have to reckon with a colossal void. In like manner, efforts to come to know the women in this study have been influenced by borrowed concepts and facets of theories that may well be subversive in this quest for an emergent psychology. However, it has been women's voices of experiences that have been the grounding of these efforts to come to know and understand a particular life-world. It must be assumed then, that there are many ways to be a woman even in a limited domain and so any attempt to theorize or associate phenomena in any coherent form is itself a moment in history and thus must be posited as such. For human reality is an embodied reality and ethnic and gender realities cannot be disassociated from their somatic variants. And thus, social construction and cultural definitions must be fused in the persons who live the lives and endure through generations of historically deposited practice that any logical construction only illumines or translates across cultures.

To participate in another construction of the real, another culture, it is essential to walk the contours and be engaged in the creative processes of dialogue and exchange. All the affirmations of identity and experiencing of a refracted socio-genetic self begin to be embodied in an individual-social semiotic that enters the flow of everyday life. Where a cultural grafting is bounded by a disjunction through forging one world of discourse to the margins of another hegemonic culture, with all the power to define the real, the language of the body is confused by two graces and only the social context provides the cues as to how to proceed. From the ground of an Afro-Creole culture on the turf beyond the Dry River the worlds often merge or else the aim rational actor protagonist shifts between the layers of meaning to hustle a way in the parallel constructions of the real. Embodied experience encounters these conflicting ideologies that only a cognitive analysis can segregate and create anew and in the voices of women the alternation of styles is not new. It is perhaps the only world there is, the only one they know and it is here that they construct their way.

> ...There is more romance in anthropology than there is in ordinary life, and our quarrels about genealogy, our visionary plays about the noble savage remain provincial, psychic justifications, strenuous attempts to create identity... Once we have lost our wish to be white we develop a longing to become black, and those two may be different, but are still careers. "The status of native is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people *with their consent*," says Sartre, introducing Fanon, and the new black continues that condition.[1]

On the other side of the 'romance' of anthropological research and the 'strenuous attempts to create identity' however is the haunting spectre of ethnocentrism. The modern emphasis on functionalist 'normative' research have couched variation from imported norms in the interpretive frameworks of cultural deprivation, social pathology and deviance. Such contributions to knowledge are but the latest incarnations of this spirit which insists by imputation and through putting on the style of objectivity in 'standard English', that no culture survived the assault on Afro-culture during slavery. The symbolic fashioning of a virtual *tabula rasa* of any memory of Africa in the mind of the slave is reminiscent of the idea that Sylvia Wynter included in her article

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1. Derek Walcott. 'What the Twilight Says: An Overture.' in Dream on Monkey Mountain 1970 p.20

on Creolization where the invading 'high/literary' culture *decapitates* the 'little/oral' culture. This may be an accurate symbolizing of the intentions of those with the might and power to enslave and to define 'right' but even the intentions of the most powerful have to enter a dialectic that includes the 'being-for-another', the slave. And the 'romantic' aspect that survived in the secret underground was the quintessential human capacity of the emancipatory imagination and that included dreams that were African.

Anthropologists and folklorists have highlighted traditions that do more than 'mimic' a 'civilized' code of conduct. According to Rex Nettleford the character of the West African spider, Anansi expresses much of the reputed spirit of Caribbean masculine jamette character with his "ostentatious professions of love, in his wrong and strong, brave but cowardly postures of bluff, in his love of leisure and corresponding dislike for work, and in his lovable rascality."[2] And Michael Beaubrun has insisted that health professionals trained abroad have ignored the theocentric avenues of a significant portion of the community. Anthropologists, novelists and sociologists have pointed to the belief structures and healing role of the Shango priestesses, Pentecostal faith healers, mystic masseurs, herbal medicine practitioners and all manner of magico-religious ideology in the Caribbean. The ideological core of these popular practitioners are those of the diviner priest of Africa. There seems little doubt that 'orthodox' medical practitioners

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[2] Walter Jekyll Jamaican Song and Story New York: Dover 1966 p.viii

(like their 'orthodox' clerical counterparts) have contributed to the attraction of spiritual healers by failing to understand or even recognize the psychological aspects of local beliefs surrounding illness. Thus there is no attempt to meet the emotional needs or articulate the gulf between these disparate philosophies of symptoms, treatments and cures. And the contemporary psychologists and other health professionals are working in an illusion of foreign authorship if they do not respect these Creolized structures of beliefs and values or recognize the alienation that is enshrined in their professional mask of clinical efficiency and objectivity.

The contemporary psychologist or any professional working among women in East Port-of-Spain must recognize the dialectic between notions from a magico-religious ideology and the contemporary popularity of a pragmatic functionalist ideology which houses contemporary mental health beliefs and codes for appropriate conduct and practice. It is important for the professional to respect the perceptions that many women have of their profession (particularly the misperceptions) and to value this knowledge in constructing a socio-genetic psychology from the ground dialoguing with both subjects.

GLOSSARY

ageable: an ageable person is an old person.

bacchanal: to make bacchanal is to shame someone in public; lewd behaviour.

Badian / Barjan: Some one from Barbados.

bad John: a jamette character who prides himself as a reputation seeker; usually engaged in the underworld; boasts of his potency or prowess with women; runs foul of the law; is a member of a band or pan-yard crew.

bad talk: use of colloquial speech for effect; someone who causes confusion or brings shame. From the French *mauvaise langue*.

bands: cloth bindings used to wrap the head of the person preparing to mourn or be baptized in the Spiritual Baptist church.

barrin' round: erecting a fence around the yard (usually galvanize in the BHE)

belair / bele: Creole dance performed by women.

big shot / big timish: respectable middle class person; playing to the gallery; used to describe political candidates. (Hester: An' I walkin' like a big shot wid meh gol' chain an spectacles goin' to church.)

blue note: $100 bill.

bojole / buljol: Creole fish dish; salt fish

boss: if someone is described as a 'boss' it means very capable or good. eg, She a boss with she black cake an' sweet bread.

botheration: causing bother; giving trouble; vexatious.

bouchette: breast bone

bounce up with: to meet; to get together; to friend with occasionally.

break biche: to play truant from school (say).

brisk / brisque: intelligent; quick to learn; sharp.

bullaman: homosexual and transsexual men.

bush: herbs sold for bush tea with curative effects; herbal remedies.

callalloo: Creole cuisine a green leaf soup with crab back, pig tail and ochroes.

calypso: truly local art form; provocative social critique, ribaldry, double entendre composed and performed in Creole language. Also known as kaiso.

canboulay: August 1, and later pre-carnival procession with flambeaux, recalling the work done by former slaves to fight cane fires on plantations. From *cannes brulees*.

cassava: root crop commonly used to make pone a sweet bread.

chanterelle: calypsonian.

Chinee: Someone of Chinese extraction.

chip chip: tiny mussels found in the sand. (chip chip gatherers are usually lower class family members)

chipping: basic dance step for carnival road march.

chook yuh head: put your head down to study something; attend to one thing; concentrate; focus on a priority.

commess: to make commess is to gossip or cause vexation in the community; cause confusion.

compeh or compere: parents' name for the godfather of their child. By extension, the term is also used to refer to a close male friend. from the French *compere* (comme pere).

confusion: similar to commess; threat to community or family order usually caused by gossip or demonic forces.

cross: someone who brings shame; a burden. (Every mother have one cross she have to bare.)

curse: a cause for concern; source of botheration; causing hardship; someone who is unreliable. (My brother is a curse)

cuss: pelt bad words at someone; rapid flow of invectives; dressing down; hurl insults.

dasheen: vegetable.

DEWD: Department of Environmental Works Division.

dougla: of African and East Indian parentage.

dread situation: dreadful; downtrodden; bad; hopeless case.

drop car: taxi with set route hired by the seat.

estudiants: students

exaltation: speaking the gospel through revelation; holy acts based on the scriptures (Spiritual Baptist practice).

fast: assume familiarity; precociousness in children

force ripe: responsibilities or knowledge out of step with age; sexually active or pregnant while still considered a 'child'.

free range children: vagrant minors; children who belong to street gangs; delinquent children; children neglected by parents.

fresh up: similar meaning to 'fast'.

friending: extra marital and / or extra residential sexual liaison

gallery: show off; make a spectacle of oneself; broadcast views

ganja: marijuana.

get down serious: be conscientious; dedicated action; revise strategies for action.

getting through: Finding work; managing under duress; surviving.

grip: suit case or carrying bag.

gru gru: fruit of the palm sold in the market.

hard: good. The hardest hard is the best.

hen: homosexual man; male prostitute

hog language: French Creole / patois.

hook-up: see 'jam-up'

hustling: live on your wits; pick up whatever comes to get by

ignorance: To get on ignorant is a performance related. Getting on ignorant refers to the specific range of acts that demonstrates in some kind of public arena that one does not have the requisite knowledge or understanding to pursue a discussion or an argument effectively. ..making a fool of oneself by revealing one's ineffectiveness as a speaker through lack of logic or veracity. (Abrahams, 1983, p.96)

jab jab: devil figures of jouvert bands.

jagabat: prostitute.

jamette: from the French *diametre* it has come to mean the underworld subculture of bad Johns, stick fighters, felons, prostitutes, dancers and what Peter Wilson has termed 'reputation seekers'.

jam-up: sexually suggestive coupling with male to rear not uncommon during carnival street dancing.

jet: black beads or bracelet to keep away the evil eye / mals yeux from babies who have not been baptized or christened.

jouvert: official start of carnival celebrations on Monday morning at dawn. From the French *jour ouvert*.

keep back: an obstacle or stumbling block; a source of frustration; a handicap.

la basse: Rubbish dump along the Beetham Highway.

la diablesse/ lajabless: legendary figure in the form of a woman whose cloven foot is hidden under a long dress. From the French *la diabless*.

licks: corporal punishment; a beating; blows.

limacol: a popular astringent lotion for cooling the skin

liming: gathering together to talk; usually a crew of males networking in the street.

living dead: someone who doesn't attend fetes or parties; introvert type; quiet.

machomeh: parental term for the godmother of a child. Its usage is similar to that of 'compeh'. Godparents of the same child would also address one another as 'compeh' and 'machomeh'. From the French *ma commere*. Note: a 'machomeh' man is effeminate.

mal yeux / maljo: evil eye. From the French *mals yeux / mauvais yeux* The custom of having babies wear a string of 'jet' beads to ward off maljo still lingers on.

mama poule: effeminate man or hen pecked husband. From the French *maman poule*.

marronage: derived from the rebellion of slaves running away and setting up villages. It is now used to mean guerrilla tactics of any kind which counters eurocentrism.

mauby: sweet drink made from bark.

mook: a type of mussel found in the sand enjoyed with lime and chilli dip.

mourn: a tract of prayers, cleansing and fasting, being placed in bands to prepare for manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Spiritual Baptist faith; the ground of sorrow.

move good: get along well, harmoniously (with neighbours, family)

obeah: conjuring; bush remedies; 'witchcraft'; magico-religious arts.

oldtimish: old fashioned.

outside child: illegitimate child; a child born to friending partners before a stable union was entered into.

parang: Afro-Spanish christmas celebrations; House to house party troupe with Spanish nativity songs and castillian dancing and the stick dance.

picky head: description of Afro hair texture.

pinny: neologism meaning very thin (like Penny C, tinny, thin, puny. tiny)

poncha creme or punch a crema: very rich christmas drink made of rum, eggs, cream, condensed milk spices and lime juice or rind.

pressurize: apply pressure; victimize; box someone into a corner; bully someone; sexual harassment.

provision: sometimes called ground provisions; root crops.

put behind: forget; let go of the past; think ahead; avoid procrastination.

robber talk: blustering or threatening use of language; holding over; assuming superiority through vested analysis of events.

roti: unleavened bread used to wrap curried meat or vegetables.

saga boy: fancy dresser having his way with women and living on these charms.

scrunting: living close to the ground. Neologism from hunting, scrounging, grunting ('hog language'—French Creole)

see my 'royal': prolonged aggravation; trouble; strife.

set: the children born to one father. (She has 3 sets of children; ie, children to three fathers).

shame: to shame someone is to bring public attention to the family; to behave inappropriately.

Shango: Afro-religious cult distinguished by African deities, animal sacrifices, drumming and dancing.

shark an' bakes: Creole cuisine of shark and fried dumplings.

shew-shewing: making sounds of approval.

slave mentality: exploitation; subjugation through low paying menial labour; assumed superiority especially racial prejudice.

soucoyant: fire ball that sucks blood; vampire.

souse: Creole cuisine of pig foot in lime, chilli, garlic and vinegar.

stay: to stay for a child is to agree to be a godparent; to perform the duties of the godparent.

stick: cigarette made from marijuana.

stupidness: get on foolishly; make commess; ignorant behaviour.

susu or sousou: A local system of setting aside fixed small sums over an agreed period organized by a 'banker' (who debits a set sum for her/his 'trouble'). This informal banking system originated in West Africa. Saving for christmas, carnival, Easter, christenings and a child's first communion when larger sums of money are needed has helped to keep this traditional system functioning. Possibly from the French *se soutenir* meaning to support or sustain one another, to afford an expense.

sweet: nice. She too sweet, man.

sweetman: paramour who lives off a woman's earnings.

take it on: to let someone or something aggravate or cause vexation; procrastination; indignation.

tamarind ball: Creole delicacy, sweet.

tamarind rod: a favourite rod for punishing children in schools; caning implement.

TELCO; T&T Telephone system.

tent: venue for calypso rivalry between christmas and carnival.

tote: to tote something is to carry it. (I tote she to hospital.)

trust: small line of credit from local vendor or shopkeeper.

T&TEC: T&T Electrical Company.

tulum: creole confection.

tut-tuts: breasts.

WASA: T&T Water and Sewerage Authority.

zavoca / zaboca: avocado pear

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APPENDIX 1

Table of Historic Events

1498 - Christopher Columbus sights 'Trinidad'
Indian population at approx. 18,000.
1530 - Antonio Sedena, Trinidad's first Governor.
1577 - Don Joseph de Oruna founded St Joseph
1592 - Governor Antonio De Berrio founded St Joseph,
'San Jose de Oruna'
1595 - St Joseph burnt by Sir Walter Raleigh; de Berrio taken prisoner.
1606 - Fernando de Berrio Governor; St Joseph rebuilt
African slaves from the Dutch West Indies for tobacco cultivation.
1733/39 - Smallpox epidemic
1776 - Cedula of 1776. Charles III granted land to foreign Roman Catholics.
1777 - Arrival of French planters including Roume de St Laurent.
1783/4 - Cedula of population by St Laurent; arrival of Gov. Chacon. Cabildo moves to Port of Spain.
1789 - Beginning of the French Revolution.
Spain opens slave trade to her colonies.
1791 - Beginning of the Revolution in Santo Domingo (Haiti)
1794 - French Government abolishes slavery in the French Empire
(slavery returns after the rev govt is overthrown)
1796 - Spain and Britain at war.
1797 - Capitulation of the island to Britain.
Thomas Picton as Governor.
1802/3 - Commissioners Picton, Fullarton and Hood.
Resignation of Picton; appointment of Gov. Hislop.
1807 - Abolition of British Slave Trade.
1808 - Great Fire of Port of Spain
1812 - Registration of slaves begins.
approximately 20% population free.
1813/23 - Sir Ralph Woodford Governor.
1823 - Free Coloured population petition for civil rights.
Amelioration Order;
Corporal punishment of females abolished.
1825 - Prohibition of imported slaves from other colonies
(except domestic retinue)
1826 - Repeal of some discriminatory laws against free coloured.
1829 - Legal equality for free coloured population.
1831 - New Amelioration Order in Council.
1832 - Establishment of nominated legislative council.
1834 - Emancipation of slaves.
1837 - Mutiny of St Joseph led by Daaga (Donald Stewart). Donald Stewart (Daaga), Maurice Ogston (Mawee) and Edward Coffin executed by firing squad.
1838 - End of Apprenticeship
Mandingo Society petitions for repatriation to Africa.
1839/40 - Arrival of French and German immigrants.
1840 - Abolition of Cabildo and establishment of Town Council in Port of

Spain.
Beginning of 'Anglicization' policy.
1841 - Immigration of liberated Africans.
1844 - Establishment of the Church of England.
1845 - Arrival of the first Indian Immigrants.
1846 - Fall in sugar prices.
Arrival of Portuguese immigrants from Madeira.
1846/54 - Governor Lord Harris.
1851 - Government Primary (ward) schools.
1853 - Indentured Chinese immigration.
1854 - Immigration Ordinance No 24 of 1854.
1857 - Successful oil drilling; Establishment of Queens Collegiate School.
1863 - Establishment of St Mary's College.
1868 - Canadian Presbyterian mission to Indians.
1869 - Crown lands to small purchasers; commutation of lands to East Indians.
1881 - Carnival riots Port of Spain.
1884 - Carnival riots San Fernando; Hosein massacre.
1887 - Royal Franchise Commission.
1897 - West Indian Royal Commission; Establishment of TWA and EINA (Trinidad Workers Association and East Indian National Assn.)
1901 - Formation of branches of Pan African Association.
1903 - Water riots: Red House burnt down.
1904 - First Black person appointed to legislation council.
First Girl Guides troop.Trinidad Co-operative Bank opened.
1914/18 - World War I; British West India Regiment.
1916 - Uprising among German immigrants at St James Camp (17 Oct)
1917 - Ordinance to Render Illegal, Indulgence in the Practice of the body known as the Shouters, Nov 27.
End of Indian immigration to Trinidad.
New Public Health Dept by PoS City Council.
Mayor opens bandstand in Woodford Sq.
Trinidad Guardian begins publication.
1918 - Portuguese Association Hall opened.
Carnival parade in city.
1919/20 - Labour unrest, strikes, disturbances.
1921 - End of Indenture.
Coterie of Social Workers started.Catholic Hostel for Working Girls opened.
1921/22 - Wood Commission.
1923 - A.A. Cipriani president of TWA.
1925 - First elections of legislative council; Cipriani in council.
1926 - Children's breakfast shed started by Coterie of Social workers in Edward St.
1928 - St.James Mosque opened.St Mary's Home for the Blind opened,Dry River Ordinance.
1930 - Resolution allowing women to serve on PoS Council.
1929/30 - Oliver Commission.
1929/39 - Great Depression.
1931 - Divorce Bill Controversy.
1932 - Trade Union Ordinance. Salvation Army Night Shelter Duncan St.

1934 - Strikes and riots by sugar workers; Formation of the Negro Welfare Association; Decline of Cipriani leadership. Roxy Cinema Opened.Official currency from pounds to dollars.
1935 - Apex Oilfields strike and hunger march; Butler emerges; Trinidad Citizens League by Rienzi and Butler.
1936 - Audrey Jeffers MBE-first woman elected to City Council.
1937 - Island Wide Strikes and Riots: Forster Commission: Gov. Fletcher dismissed; Butler tried and imprisoned; Establishment of Caroni Ltd.
1938/39 - West India Royal Commission (Moyne)
1939 - Working Girls Hostel Duncan St. Jewish Assn formed. Red Cross started.
1939/45 - World War II; oil boom.
1940 - John John Day Nursery started.
1941 - Mayor PoS arrested on conspiracy charge.
1941/45 - Construction of US bases North West peninsula and Wallerfield.
1945 - Butler released: Adult suffrage; Death of Cipriani.
1946 - Elections.
1946/47 - Strikes and riots in Port of Spain. Women's Auxiliary of the Seamen and Waterfront TU threaten to 'man' the picket lines when their husbands were arrested.
1946/50 - Audrey Jeffers becomes first female member of Legislative Council in acknowledgment of her social welfare activities.
1947 - F.W. Dalley's first report. Telephone service begins
1948 - Town Hall destroyed by fire;Princess Elizabeth Home opened.
1947/48 - Constitutional reform committee.
1948 - Eric Williams Caribbean Commission.
1949 - Indo-Caribbean Cultural Institute opens with a committee including the social worker Gemma Ramkeesoon.
1951 - Ordinance Against Shouter Baptists repealed March 30.
1950/56 - Albert Gomes heads 'Quasi Ministerial' Regime.
1954 - Williams debates with Dom Basil Matthews. Earthquake injures 89 people.
1955 - University of Woodford Square Princess Margaret attends civic reception at Princess building.
1956 - Formation of Peoples National Party: Party Group, Constituency Group; General Council, Central Executive, Legislative Group, Women's League, Youth League, Annual Convention. PNM wins 13 seats and forms government (1956-61) First batch of Police Women pass out at St James Barracks.
1956-57 - Crash Program introduced to curb unemployment and gang warfare (gangs: style crampers, silk hats, fallen angels, Belmont youths etc.)
1957 - PNM carnival competitions.
1958 - C.L.R. James returns to edit PNM paper. Rev Billy Graham preaches to 10,000 people on the Savannah. Fire in Port of Spain.
1960/61 - James Breaks with Williams.
1961 - General Elections; PNM wins 20 out of 30.
1962 - Queens Hall Conference on Independence;

Independence on Aug 31, 1962.
1963 - Williams 'Meet the People Tour'; Special Works Programs and Better Village Projects
1965 - Education Act
1967 - Commonwealth Caribbean signs UN Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.
Family Planning Association special Convention, Population Council appointed
1970 - Black Power riots; State of Emergency declared.
1975/85 - United Nations Decade on Women.
1975 - Establishment of the Standing Commission on the Status of Women; UN goals for women, *Equality, Development & Peace*
1977 - Jannelle Penny Commiseong wins Miss World Title.
1980 - CARICOM Secretariat appoints Women's Affairs Officer; mid-decade conference Copenhagen, *Employment, Health and Education.*
1985 - Women And Development Unit (WAND), CARICOM and ECLA sponsor "Caribbean Celebration" in Barbados to end the decade.